

THE **JG 26** WAR DIARY

VOLUME ONE 1939-1942



DONALD CALDWELL

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JG 26
WAR DIARY

VOLUME ONE 1939-1942

DONALD CALDWELL

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**Dedicated to the memory of
Adolf Galland,
the guiding force of Jagdgeschwader 26
and the German fighter arm**

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PREFACE

Jagdgeschwader 26 (JG 26), the "Abbeville Kids", is the Luftwaffe fighter wing best known in the UK and the USA. It was one of only two German fighter units to remain on the Western front for the entire war. This one wing's rise and fall mirror the history of the German fighter arm, the German Air Force, and Germany itself. Its story is a reflection in microcosm of the entire air war in the West, and should be of interest to all students of air power.

For much of the war JG 26 was considered by both the Allies and the Axis to be the best German fighter unit. It first gained that status as a result of outstanding leadership during the Battle of Britain, and held it as a natural outgrowth of its war station on the Channel coast, where its mission was to fend off attacks by the best aircraft and airmen that the Allies could muster. During the years 1941 and 1942 JG 26, with an average of 124 fighters under command, completely dominated the airspace over northern France and western Belgium.

This volume presents a daily chronology of the wing's activities from its origin until the end of 1942, when it had reached the peak of its power and influence. As only two of the thirty volumes of the unit's official diary survived the war, the creation of a daily combat log was not a simple matter of transcribing records, but required careful comparison of Allied documents, especially those derived from radio intelligence, with the limited material available from Germany. My two previous books on JG 26, a general and a photographic history, were very well received by the unit's veterans. As a consequence they granted me unprecedented access to their personal documents and photo collections for this new work, which is based largely on the primary documentation obtained from these men and on material from the national archives of Germany and the UK and from the USAF Historical Research Agency.

I take full responsibility for the book's errors of commission and omission, and welcome correspondence with anyone who has corrections or other information to share. The final volume of the war diary, and my last book on JG 26, will issue in 1998. After that, a jointly-authored general study of the German air defenses is planned in order to fill a major gap in the history of the air war; this will be one of the last opportunities to obtain information from the participants, who are rapidly leaving us.

Donald Caldwell
Lake Jackson, Texas
July, 1996

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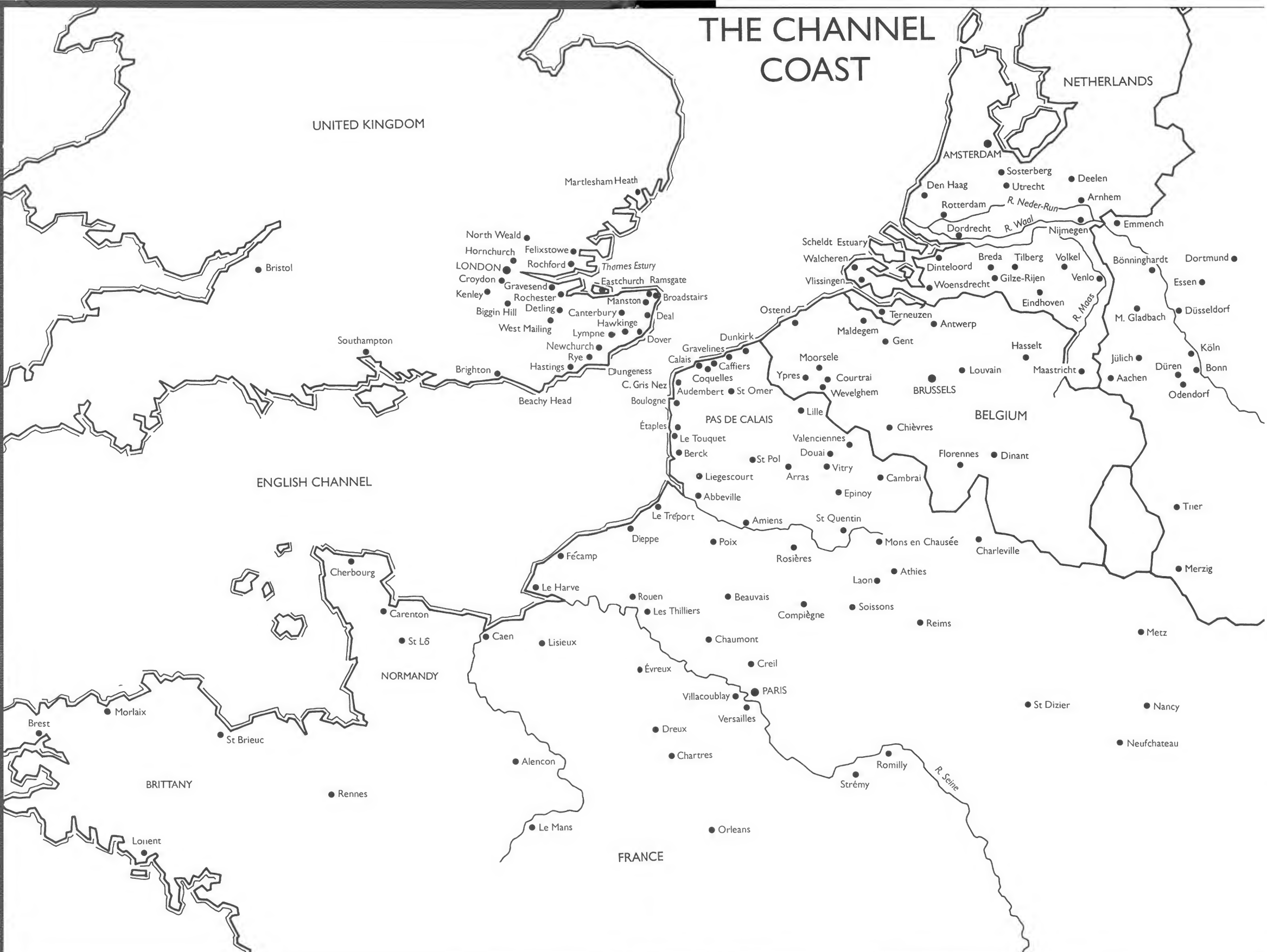
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THE CHANNEL COAST





Chapter One

THE PRE-WAR YEARS

March 1936 – August 1939

Jagdgeschwader 26, or JG 26, traced its origin to the Third Gruppe of Jagdgeschwader 134 (III/JG 134), one of the first fighter units of the early Luftwaffe. On 7 March 1936, Hptm. Oskar Dinort, the Kommandeur of III/JG 134, was informed of Hitler's decision to reoccupy Germany's western border states, which had remained demilitarized by treaty after the withdrawal of Allied occupation forces in 1930. The Rhineland was to return to the protection of the German Reich. As part of a massive bluff, two Staffeln of Dinort's Gruppe were to circle the cathedral of Köln at noon on 8 March, and then land at the Köln civil airport. These Staffeln were the only air units involved in the operation. The German armed forces were still tiny – the Luftwaffe had been established only one year before, on 1 March 1935 – but the Allies failed to respond, and the Gruppe settled in with its He 51 fighters at the city's airport, beginning an association with the lower Rhineland that was to last for the nine years of JG 26's existence.

A few months after his successful Rhineland operation, Adolf Hitler responded favorably to a request for assistance by General Francisco Franco, the leader of the Spanish Nationalist insurgents, setting in motion an extended trial period in Spain for the Luftwaffe's men and machines that lasted for over two and one-half years and established the doctrines that governed the Luftwaffe in the world war to come. The first aid from the Luftwaffe comprised six He 51s with their pilots and support equipment. These were put aboard a freighter in Hamburg on 1 August 1936, and reached Cadiz on the 6th. The contingent was commanded by Oblt. Hannes Trautloft of III/JG 134. Two of his pilots, Lt. Herwig Knüppel and Lt. Wolf-Heinrich Freiherr von Houwald, came with him from the small Gruppe at Köln, which was thus well represented in this, the Luftwaffe's second major test. The air contingent grew into a full fighter group, Jagdgruppe 88, which was part of a small air fleet, the Condor Legion. Four pilots who had seen service in JG 26's predecessor units were killed in Spain: Lt. Fritz Awe, Lt. Karl Bötticher, Lt. Alexander Graf von Dohna, and Uffz. Hans Nirminger.

By the time the war ended in March 1939, 125 German officers and 280 non-commissioned officers had served as fighter pilots in Spain. Of these men, 27 officers and at least ten NCOs served in JG 26 or its predecessor units. There is little documentation available concerning the service of the NCOs, but the logbook of one of them, Unteroffizier Gerhard Halupczok, has survived, and provides some interesting insights. Halupczok was born in 1912 in Upper Silesia

and grew up a typical air-minded German youth. His formal education ended with primary school. He became a mechanic, learned to fly gliders, and eventually joined the Luftsportverband (Air Sport Society). He then joined the National Socialist Flying Corps and in September 1934 began training for powered flight in Breslau. After advanced training at Stuttgart he was accepted in the Luftwaffe, and in October 1936 joined a bomber unit, I/KG 162 "Immelmann". By April 1937 he was flying Ar 68 fighters with JG 131. His first flight in a Bf 109 was made in June 1938. In October 1938 he left JG 131 for a "leave" in Spain.

Upon his arrival Halupczok was assigned to Jagdgruppe 88 and was given a brand-new Bf 109E to fly. After a single familiarization flight on 19 December he was added to the duty roster, and flew his first combat sortie, a bomber escort mission, the next day. He shot down a Polikarpov I-15 fighter on 6 February 1939, in one of the war's last aerial battles. Halupczok flew on the Condor Legion's last combat mission, on 28 March, and finally ended his tour on 19 May 1939. His eighty-four combat sorties included fighter sweeps and bomber escorts. Low-level strafing missions were flown toward the end, when the Nationalist side had achieved aerial supremacy. Halupczok returned to Germany and was assigned to 2/JG 26 in Köln, still an Unteroffizier. He resumed his role as a wingman – but a very experienced one.



The Ar 68s of II/JG 234 (later II/JG 26) during an inspection at Düsseldorf in 1937. (*Spies*)

Back in the Rhineland a new Geschwader headquarters, Jagdgeschwader 234, and a new fighter Gruppe, II/JG 234, were established at Düsseldorf in early 1937. Owing to the Luftwaffe's rapid expansion the Geschwader headquarters remained unstaffed for over a year. When the Köln Gruppe was redesignated as I/JG 234, the Geschwader attained a state of organization that stayed constant for the next two years. Each Gruppe administered three sequentially numbered Staffeln: I/JG 234 contained the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Staffeln, while II/JG 234 contained the 4th, 5th, and 6th. Hptm. Walter Grabmann succeeded Hptm. Dinort as Kommandeur of I/JG 234, while Maj. Eduard Ritter von Schleich took over II/JG 234. In mid-1937 I/JG 234 moved into a new military airbase, Köln-Ostheim. JG 234 was equipped initially with the Luftwaffe's two standard



A He 51B of 2/JG 234 (later 2/JG 26) on maneuvers in July 1937. (Meyer)

biplane fighters. The First Gruppe flew the Heinkel He 51; the Second Gruppe, the Arado Ar 68.

The Geschwader began receiving Messerschmitt Bf 109Bs in November 1937, and was the second Luftwaffe unit to equip fully with the new monoplane fighter, at that time the most advanced in the world. In November 1938, JG 234 finally obtained its first Kommodore, the highly-respected Obst. Eduard Ritter von Schleich, a Great War *Pour le mérite* winner known as the “Black Knight”. The Geschwader was renumbered that same month as JG 132, a designation that lasted less than a year. The unit was also awarded an honor title. On 11 December 1938 the Geschwader became Jagdgeschwader 132 “Schlageter”. The name of Albert Leo Schlageter was well-known in the Rhineland. He had been executed by the French army in 1923 after blowing up a section of the Duisburg-Düsseldorf railroad track to protest the reparations policies of the Allied occupying forces. Honor titles were but rarely granted by the Luftwaffe, and this one served to reinforce the ties between the Geschwader and the area in which it was based. The Geschwader emblem, a black gothic “S” (for Schlageter) in a white shield, was painted on all aircraft and much of the ground equipment.

Von Schleich’s replacement as Kommandeur of II/JG 132 was Hptm. Werner Palm, a Spanish War veteran. Palm was soon succeeded by Hptm Herwig Knüppel, another “Spaniard”. Hptm. Grabmann left I/JG 132 to take over Jagdgruppe 88 in Spain, trading commands with Hptm. Gotthardt Handrick. Handrick was by far the most famous German fighter pilot in Spain, having won the modern pentathlon at the 1936 Olympics in Berlin. Hptm. Hubertus von Bonin, Hptm. Karl Ebbighausen, Oblt. Hubertus Freiherr von Holtey, Hptm. Walter Kienitz, Oblt. Fritz Losigkeit, and Oblt. Edu Neumann were all promoted to Staffel commands after their return from Spain.

The most common sources of pilots for the Geschwader were the fighter pilot training and officers’ training schools. Commissioned pilots who joined the unit in 1938 and 1939 direct from training included Lt. Peter Blohm, Lt. Kurt



The execution of Albert Leo Schlageter on the Golzheimer Heath near Düsseldorf on 26 May 1923. (*Gentli*)

Ebersberger, Fhr. Eberhard Henrici, Lt. Otto-Heinrich Hilleke, Lt. Klaus Mietusch, Ofhr. Joachim Müncheberg, Fhr. Johannes Naumann, Lt. Kurt Pielmeyer, Lt. Walter Schneider and Lt. Gerhard Schöpfel. A few pilots, including Lt. Alfred Pomaska, Lt. Josef Bürschgens and Lt. Johannes Seifert,



Aircraft lineup photographed during 1937 field maneuvers. I/JG 234 Bf 109Bs are in the foreground, with II/JG 234 Ar 68s in the rear. (*Meyer*)



Bf 109Ds of II/JG 234 at Düsseldorf in 1938. (Petrick)



Communications troops of 4/JG 234 on maneuvers to Jever in 1938. (Sundermann)

transferred in from other fighter units. These officers, and a highly competent and experienced ground staff, formed a firm foundation for the unit's success in the coming war.

The peacetime routine of the Geschwader was similar to that of fighter units around the world – formation flying, simulated aerial combat, and firing on ground targets. Joint field exercises with the army became more frequent in the late 1930s, as it became apparent that Germany was fated to enter once again into offensive warfare. Aerial gunnery practice was a problem, as central Europe then, as now, was very crowded. A high point for the flying and ground crews was the annual excursion to the Luftwaffe's North Sea training base on the Island of Sylt, where the pilots had the opportunity to fire on towed targets. Air accidents are an inevitable accompaniment to military flying. An accident in March 1939 cost the Geschwader a very promising pilot, Lt. Peter Boddem,



The Bf 109E-1s of the two wingmen of the First Gruppe Stabskette, photographed in early 1939. The aircraft bear identical formation markings, a single chevron. (*Aders via Petrick*)

who was killed in the crash of a Ju 52 transport in which he was returning to Germany following his second tour in Spain. Originally an enlisted pilot, he had been awarded a commission for his ten aerial victories in Spain.

On 1 May 1939 the unit was renumbered for the last time, its official designation becoming Jagdgeschwader 26 "Schlageter". One practical result of being a "named" unit was that for propaganda, if not necessarily operational, reasons,



The 6th Staffel's unique goat emblem, seen on a Bf 109E in 1939. (*Dölling via Rasse*)



The 6th Staffel's Fw. Franz Lüders (POW 21 Jun 41) returns from a flight in the summer of 1939. (Petrick)

the Schlageter Geschwader was always among the first to receive new equipment. Re-equipment with Bf 109E-1s began in December 1938, and was complete by the end of January 1939. With a top speed of 342 mph and a service ceiling of 34,500 feet, the airplane's performance was superior to that of any other fighter in operational service in the world. This was the model of the Messerschmitt fighter in which the Schlageter pilots would shortly go to war.



The Bf 109E-1 of the First Gruppe Kommandeur, Major Gotthardt Handrick, photographed during maneuvers during the summer of 1939. It carried temporary white bands around the fuselage and tail tip. (Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv)



Major Handrick (on wing) explains something concerning his aircraft to an NCO in the cockpit. Handrick's airplane bore a top hat insignia commemorating his service as Kommandeur of Jagdgruppe 88 in Spain. (*Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv*)



The 6th Staffel during the last prewar maneuvers, 10 August 1939. Note the white temporary markings under the wingtip of "yellow 5". (*Petrick*)

Thanks to the Spanish experience the tactical formations and doctrine of the Luftwaffe's fighter arm, the Jagdwaffe, were the best in the world; the pilots also considered themselves the best, and looked forward to the future with confidence.

Tension increased in Europe throughout the summer of 1939. On 25 August, the First Gruppe was ordered to move from Köln to Bonn-Odendorf, across the Rhine in the Eifel forest. At 0100 that same day the Second Gruppe received orders to relocate "inconspicuously" from Düsseldorf to Bönninghardt, west of the Rhine near the Dutch border, and to be operational in the new location by 1815 hours. The start of the war on 1 September thus found the Geschwader "in the field"; its mission – the air defense of the western frontier.



Dispersed Bf 109Es of 4/JG 26, the Adamsonstaffel, probably photographed on maneuvers in Germany in the summer of 1939. At this time the Staffel was part of the Second Gruppe; later in 1939 it joined the new Third Gruppe as its 8th Staffel. (*Meyer*)

Chapter Two

SITZKRIEG

September 1939 – May 1940

1 September 1939

Germany's invasion of Poland initiated open conflict in Europe. The stated mission of JG 26 was "to protect the industrial region and the western German border". The pilots on duty spent the day sitting in their cockpits or readiness rooms when not flying defensive patrols or training missions.

The Geschwader suffered its first fatality of the new war on its first day, when Uffz. Josef Schuhbauer of the 2nd Staffel suffered engine failure on a patrol. He lost control and crashed while trying to reach Köln-Ostheim.

Germany at this time had no organized night air defenses. 10(Nacht)/JG 26 was established at Bonn-Hangelar with the mission of "night flak support". It was commanded by Oblt. Johannes Steinhoff, who transferred in from an experimental night fighting Staffel, 1(Nachtjagd)/LG 1. The new Staffel was equipped with obsolescent Bf 109D and Ar 68 fighters.

3 September

Britain and France declared war on Germany. The Geschwader's routine was unchanged. Its bases were opposite the neutral countries of Belgium and The Netherlands, and as British and French aircraft rarely strayed that far north, the Geschwader would see little combat during the Sitzkrieg or "sitting war" that lasted until Germany's invasion of France and the Low Countries the following May.

23 September

The Third Gruppe of the Geschwader was established at Werl under Hptm. Walter Kienitz. The Gruppe expanded rapidly, utilizing cadres from established units. The 2nd Staffel contributed half of its pilots and ground staff to the new 7th Staffel; the 4th Staffel moved almost in total to the new 8th Staffel; while the 9th Staffel received its initial draft of personnel from a Zerstörer unit, II/ZG 26. Oblt. Losigkeit replaced Kienitz as Kapitän of the 2nd Staffel. Oblt. Neumann became the first Kapitän of the 8th Staffel, and was replaced in the 4th by Oblt. Karl Ebbighausen. Oblt. Schöpfel was the first Kapitän of the 9th Staffel. The name of the first Kapitän of the 7th does not appear in any of the surviving records.

28 September

The Geschwader scored its first air victory and suffered its first combat casualty.



The cockpit area of a 4th Staffel Bf 109E-1, showing the Staffel's tiger emblem – Bönninghardt, Autumn 1939. (*Petrick*)



Lt. Josef Bürschgens' Bf 109E-1 "red 5" (2/JG 26) after he had claimed the Geschwader's first victory – Mettlach-Merzig, 28 September 1939. (*Bürschgens*)

The 2nd Staffel's Lt. Josef Bürschgens and a wingman staged through an advanced landing ground near Wittlich to escort a Henschel Hs 126 on a reconnaissance mission over the Saar, far to the south of the Geschwader's usual patrol area. Just before turning back Bürschgens saw eleven French Curtiss Hawk 75As below him; they were inside Germany, and thus legitimate targets

according to the current rules of engagement. Bürschgens attacked the French fighters while the Henschel made its escape. One Hawk fell away smoking, and the Geschwader credited Bürschgens with its destruction, but his claim was apparently never confirmed by Berlin. The German pilot quickly lost his wingman, and was then hit from behind with a burst of fire that broke his right shoulder and seriously damaged his aircraft. He made a successful forced landing in a minefield in front of the German West Wall defenses, and returned to the Geschwader the following May. The French fighter pilots, from GC II/5, claimed one Bf 109, which was unconfirmed; their aircraft suffered no reportable damage.

30 September

The Third Gruppe had received its full complement of pilots and Bf 109Es by this date, bringing the Geschwader's aircraft strength to 129 Bf 109Es in the day fighter component, and fourteen Bf 109Ds and six Ar 68s in the night fighter Staffel. With the exception of the latter unit, which was something of an *ad hoc* afterthought, the Geschwader's organization was typical of the period. It comprised a Geschwader Stab flight, with three aircraft; and three Gruppen, each containing a Stab flight of three aircraft and three sequentially-numbered Staffeln with twelve aircraft.

3 October

Fw. Herbert Zimmermann of 10(Nacht)/JG 26 lost his bearings and force-landed in The Netherlands after running out of fuel. The Dutch interned him and confiscated his Ar 68.

10 October

The 1st Staffel's Uffz. Fritz Siebeck became the Geschwader's second fatality of the war. Siebeck and his Rottenführer (element leader) Lt. Henrici apparently flew the reciprocal of their assigned course while on a patrol flight, got lost above the cloud deck, and ran out of fuel. Henrici bailed out successfully, but Siebeck rode his aircraft into the ground southwest of Iserlohn.

31 October

Hptm. Kienitz left the Third Gruppe with orders to join JG 3 and form a new Staffel for service aboard the aircraft carrier *Graf Zeppelin*. Maj. Ernst Freiherr von Berg, a former cavalry officer, took command of the Gruppe. Pilots joining the Geschwader from the training schools during October and November included Uffz. Artur Beese, Uffz. Bernhard Eberz, Fhr. Gustav Sprick, and Uffz. Wilhelm Philipp.

1 November

The Geschwader's day fighter units moved to new bases for the winter: the Geschwaderstab and the First Gruppe to Dortmund, the Second Gruppe to Werl, and the Third Gruppe to Essen-Mühlheim.

7 November

The second, and last, of the Geschwader day fighters' air victories during the Sitzkrieg was gained by Lt. Joachim Müncheberg, the adjutant of the Third Gruppe, who shot a Blenheim light bomber of the RAF's No. 57 Squadron into the Rhine River near Opladen.



A 9th Staffel Bf 109E-1 at Mühlheim during the Sitzkrieg of late 1939-early 1940. Note the very large wing insignia, ordered by the RLM after incidents of "friendly fire" during the Polish campaign, and the early "Hellhound" squadron insignia beneath the cockpit. (*Glunz*)



Major Ernst Freiherr von Berg, Third Gruppe Kommandeur from November 1939 to June 1940, photographed beside his Bf 109E during the winter of 1939-1940. The square yellow command pennant is noteworthy. (*Neumann*)

12 November

10(Nacht)/JG 26 was transferred with its Bf 109Ds to Jever, to bolster the air defenses of the Wilhelmshaven naval base. It was attached for operations to the newly-organized JG 1, which was commanded by Obstlt. Karl Schumacher.



The 5th Staffel's Oblt. Hubertus Baron von Holtey and Lt. Karl Borris relax at readiness during the Stizkrieg – Dortmund, Winter 1939–1940. (von Holtey via Mombeek)

1 December

Pilots joining the Geschwader in December included Lt. Heinz Ebeling, Lt. Josef Haiböck (formerly a pilot in the Austrian Air Force), and Lt. Karl Borris. Borris would become the only pilot to serve in JG 26 continuously from 1939 to VE Day.

9 December

Oberst von Schleich was relieved of the command of the Geschwader, in line with a policy calling for the removal of all World War I veterans from flying posts. His replacement was Major Hugo Witt, a veteran of the Reichswehr with a varied résumé. Most notably, he had served in the dirigible *Hindenburg*, and had suffered serious burns in its crash.

11 December

Oblt. Georg Beyer became Kapitän of the 7th Staffel.

14 December

Lt. Walter Horten, a member of I/JG 26 (ex-III/JG 134) since 1936, was promoted to Geschwader technical officer, replacing Lt. Klaus Mietusch, a young pilot with little technical training. Horten, an energetic and brilliant aviation engineer, is best known today for his innovative flying wing designs.

18 December

RAF Bomber Command ordered a midday raid on warships believed to be berthed at Wilhelmshaven. Given the weather forecast of crystal-clear skies, this was dramatic evidence of the RAF's confidence in the defensive capabilities of



The eleven pilots of the 8th Staffel, formerly the 4th, pose in front of the Bf 109E-1 of their Kapitän, Oblt. Edu Neumann, in late 1939. (*Neumann*)



A close-up of Oblt. Neumann's Bf 109E-1 showing the Adamson Staffel emblem and the red command pennant – Essen-Mühlheim, late 1939. (*Neumann*)

its bombers. Twenty-two of the twenty-four Wellingtons dispatched passed over Bremen, turned west, crossed Wilhelmshaven, performed a triangular search of Jade bay, and set course northward for Heligoland, without dropping their bombs. The ships were not there, and the RAF was at that time under orders not to bomb the German mainland. Response by the German air defenses was inexcusably late; the ground commanders had refused to believe the evidence of their own radar, but could not ignore the presence of bombers overhead. Oblt. Steinhoff, leading five Bf 109Ds, and Obstlt. Schumacher, with Oblt. Johann Fuhrmann of 10(Nacht)/JG 26 as his wingman, were the first to reach the departing bombers. Schumacher downed his target; Fuhrmann attempted a stern attack, was hit by crossfire from the British tail gunners, and was forced to ditch in the North Sea, where he drowned before he could be rescued. Steinhoff's formation restric-

ted itself to beam attacks, as ordered, and was quite effective. The Wellington had no side defenses, and Steinhoff's aircraft suffered no damage, despite having to close to very short range to make effective use of their light armament of 7.7mm machine guns. The Staffel claimed six victories; three were ultimately confirmed.



Uffz. Waldemar Gödecker, an 8th Staffel engine mechanic, stands next to "red 13", which carries an unusual variation of the Adamson emblem. Apparently it is red, the Staffel color at this time – Essen-Mühlheim, late 1939. (*G. Schmidt*)

The one-sided battle was joined by Bf 109s and Bf 110s of the other Jever units, JGr 101, II/JG 77, and I/ZG 76. For a cost of two Bf 109Es shot down and twelve Bf 109s and Bf 110s with recordable damage, thirty-one additional victories were claimed. Seven of these were disallowed, but the total of twenty-



A line-up of 8th Staffel vehicles – Essen-Mühlheim, late 1939. (*Buchholz*)

eight victories that were confirmed was more than the total number of British aircraft involved.

The RAF's true losses were bad enough; twelve Wellingtons were shot down and six crash-landed on their return to England. The unusually large discrepancy between Luftwaffe claims and RAF losses has led to a prolonged controversy between German and British historians over the number of RAF aircraft present. Recent research in the UK has confirmed that only twenty-four Wellingtons flew this mission. The excessive German claims are attributable to the unprecedented scale of the battle, the inexperience of the aircrews, and to the fact that aircraft of several units were involved and made simultaneous attacks, which almost always results in duplication of claims.

Before year's end 10(Nacht)/JG 26 left the Schlagerter Geschwader and joined IV(Nacht)/JG 2, a specialized night fighting organization, where it was redesignated 12(Nacht)/JG 2.

1 January 1940

Pilots joining JG 26 in January and February included Lt. Hermann Ripke, Lt. Kurt Dähne, and Lt. Walter Reimer. The Geschwader took on strength a number of Bf 109E-3s, in which the two wing-mounted machine guns of the Bf 109E-1 were replaced by 20mm MG/FF cannon. Efforts by the Messerschmitt firm to equip the new model with a third 20mm cannon, mounted between the engine cylinder banks and firing through the propeller hub, were unsuccessful, and apparently slowed production; the Geschwader was not able to replace all of its E-1s, which were armed with only four 7.7mm machine guns, until late autumn.

27 January

The Second Gruppe transferred from Werl, joining the Geschwaderstab and First Gruppe at Dortmund.

10 February

The First Gruppe transferred from Dortmund to Bönninghardt, where it was assigned to the newly-organized JG 51 Geschwaderstab for operations. The Gruppe remained subordinated to JG 26 for administration, but did not return to its home Geschwader until the conclusion of the campaign in France. To maintain its operational strength as a three-Gruppe Geschwader, JG 26 commanded a series of Gruppen from other Geschwader during the coming months.

1 March

Oblt. Wolf-Heinrich von Houwald left the Geschwader to take command of III/JG 52, and was succeeded as Kapitän of 3/JG 26 by Oblt. Johannes Seifert.

16 March

Oblt. Kuno Wendt took over the 8th Staffel from Oblt. Edu Neumann, who left to join JG 27.

26 March

Uffz. Bruno Boy of the 8th Staffel was killed when his Bf 109E collided with another aircraft while on a training flight from Essen-Mühlheim. The other pilot was uninjured.



7th Staffel groundcrewmen on the firing range during the first winter of war, 1939–1940. Standing, from left: (1st) Gefr. Buchmann, (2nd) Gefr. Stupp, (5th) Ogfr. Juris, (7th) Gefr. Müller, (8th) Ogfr. Hagedorn; others unknown. (*Buchmann*)



A forced landing by a 7th Staffel Bf 109E in the Ruhr River at the beginning of the 1940 thaw. The pilot came out of it with a two-day head cold. (*Buchmann*)

9 May

The Geschwader's three Gruppen prepared to begin offensive warfare in the West from their Rhineland bases of Dortmund, Bönninghardt, and Essen-Mühlheim. The last draft of pilots to arrive from the training schools before the commencement of active hostilities included Uffz. Rudolf Iberle, Obfw. Friedrich Lorenz, Uffz. Josef Richter, Uffz. Willi Roth, Uffz. Fritz Schür, Uffz. Hermann Speck, and Fw. Erwin Stolz.

The two tables below list the Geschwader's victory claims and casualties for the period of the Sitzkrieg. This format will be followed throughout the book. In the claims lists, "Claim #" is the sequential number of the pilot's claim as documented in the unit at the time or

The 1st Staffel line chief standing beside the Bf 109E of his Kapitän, Oblt. Franz Hörnig – Dortmund, Winter 1939–40. (*Meyer*)

by later research, which has required adjustments in a few instances owing to delays by the Luftwaffe High Command (OKL) in confirming or rejecting claims. A blank in this column means that the claim was never filed by the unit, but has been established by contemporary evidence such as logbook entries, news releases, or eyewitness testimony. The unit of the "Opponent" is the



The 6th Staffel line chief enforces a little discipline among his ground crews. The aircraft still bear narrow prewar fuselage crosses – Dortmund, early 1940. (*Petrick*)



The 7th Staffel's Uffz. Hans-Dieter Rudolph (WIA 21 May 40) with his Bf 109E-1 and dog in early 1940. The Staffel's red heart emblem is located on the cowling, within a fluted shield. (*Bürschgens*)

author's best estimate. It should not be implied that this opposing aircraft was actually destroyed; that judgement is made in most cases in the text. The notations in the Confirmation ("Conf") column are conservative: a "yes" means that the number of the confirmation document issued by the OKL is known; a "no" means that either the claim was not filed or is known to have been rejected by the Geschwader or the OKL; cases whose dispositions are unknown are noted as "unk".

The emphasis in the casualty lists is on pilot losses; aircraft losses in which the pilot escaped injury will be listed in only a few special cases. Abbreviations used in the "Cas" column are: KIA = killed in action; KIFA = killed in a flying



The Bf 109E "black 2" of the 8th Staffel, photographed at Mühlheim during the Spring of 1940. The Staffel color was changed from red to black at the time the aircraft sides were repainted in lighter camouflage. (G. Schmidt)

accident; KAC = killed in a non-flying accident; WIA = wounded in action; WIFA = wounded in a flying accident; WAC = wounded in a non-flying accident; POW = prisoner of war; MIA = missing in action.

NB: The date style follows the American method of shorthand; ie, month first, day second, year third. For example, 9/28/39 is 28 September 1939.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 1 Sep 1939 – 9 May 1940

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
9/28/39	Lt.	Bürschgens	2	1	Hawk 75A	near Tündorf	5:30 PM	GC II/5	unk
11/7/39	Lt.	Müncheberg	III St	1	Blenheim	SW of Opladen	1:43 PM	57 Sqd	yes
12/18/39	Oblt.	Steinhoff	10(N) CO	1	Wellington	25-35km SSW of Heligoland	2:30 PM	37 Sqd	yes
12/18/39	Fw.	Szuggar W.	10(N)	1	Wellington	25-35km SSW of Heligoland	2:30 PM	3 Gp	unk
12/18/39	Uffz.	Gerhardt W.	10(N)	1	Wellington	25-35km SSW of Heligoland	2:35 PM	3 Gp	yes
12/18/39	Uffz.	Portz	10(N)	1	Wellington	25-35km SSW of Heligoland	2:35 PM	3 Gp	unk
12/18/39	Oblt.	Steinhoff	10(N)	2	Wellington	25-35km SSW of Heligoland	2:35 PM	3 Gp	yes
12/18/39	Uffz.	Wilke	10(N)	1	Wellington	25-35km SSW of Heligoland	2:35 PM	3 Gp	unk

JG 26 Casualties: 1 Sep 1939 – 9 May 1940

Date	Rank	Name	Cas	Unit	Aircraft	WNr	Mkgs	Place	Time	Cause
9/2/39	Uffz.	Schuhbauer, Josef	KIFA	2	Bf 109E			Köln-Ostheim		engine
9/28/39	Lt.	Bürschgens, Josef	WIA	2	Bf 109E		rd 5	SW Perl	5:30 PM	Hawk 75A
10/3/39	Fw.	Zimmermann, Herbert	Intern	10(N)	Ar 68	1907		W Bunde (NL)		out of fuel
10/10/39	Uffz.	Siebeck, Fritz	KIFA	1	Bf 109E			Albrinhausen		out of fuel
12/18/39	Oblt.	Fuhrmann, Johann	KIA	10(N)	Bf 109E			North Sea		Wellington
3/26/40	Uffz.	Boy, Bruno	KIFA	8	Bf 109E			Essen-Mühlheim		collision

Chapter Three

BLITZKRIEG IN THE WEST

May – June 1940

10 May

JG 26 fought the Western campaign as part of Oberst von Döring's Jagdfliegerführer 2 (Jafü 2), which was the fighter component of Genobst. Kesselring's Luftflotte 2. Jafü 2's other fighter and Zerstörer Geschwader were JG 27, JG 51, and ZG 26. Kesselring's forces supported Genobst. von Bock's Army Group B, which had the task of attacking the Low Countries frontally to draw the British and mobile French forces forward into Belgium, while Genobst. von Rundstedt's Army Group A cut through the Ardennes forests of southern



This 2nd Staffel Bf 109E displays a very large version of the Staffel's red devil emblem at the start of the Western Campaign. (*Losigkeit*)

Belgium and Luxembourg, outflanking the Maginot Line that ran along the French-German border and splitting the Allied forces. Jagdgeschwader 26, with its own Second and Third Gruppen and the III/JG 3 under command, operated over the Netherlands for the first few days of the campaign, as did I/JG 26, which was attached at this time to JG 51.

As dawn broke on the first morning of the campaign von Döring's fighters swept across Holland in advance of Ju 52 transports loaded with paratroopers and air-landing troops. The Schlageter fighters claimed eight Dutch aircraft on this mission and on additional patrols later in the morning. The Junkers transports' first missions were carried out without hindrance from the air, but the Dutch fought back fiercely on the ground, and by noon the airfields around Rotterdam and the Hague were littered with the wreckage of Ju 52s. Lt. Wolfgang Ludewig of the 9th Staffel was ordered to land near The Hague and ascertain the positions of an infantry division which had landed on several fields in the area that morning. Ludewig was hit by ground fire in his first attempt to land at Ypenburg. After another attempt, and still more damage, he was forced to land in the dunes outside the field. According to Dutch eyewitnesses, he was then captured; the German records make no mention of this, but he was listed as missing until his return to the Third Gruppe on 18 May. Ludewig was the Geschwader's only pilot casualty this day; one pilot bailed out successfully after combat with Dutch Fokker D21 fighters, and several other Messerschmitts sustained damage.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 10 May 1940

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
5/10/40	Fw.	Biegert	2	1	Koolhoven FK 58	SE of Rotterdam	6:25 AM	0 in service	yes
5/10/40	Oblt.	Seifert	3 CO	1	Fokker D21	Rotterdam	10:15 AM	2-1 JaVA	yes
5/10/40		5. Staffel	5	1	Fokker D21	Amsterdam	6:20 AM	1-2 JaVA	yes
5/10/40		III. Gruppe	III		unknown	unknown	6:00 AM		yes
5/10/40		III. Gr + 8. St	III		unknown	unknown	6:00 AM		yes
5/10/40		III. Gr + 8. St	III		unknown	unknown	6:00 AM		yes
5/10/40	Lt.	III. Gr + 8. St	III		unknown	unknown	6:00 AM		yes
5/10/40		Sprick	8	1	Fokker T5	Breda		BomVA	no

11 May

The assumption of the British and French was that the main German attack would come through Belgium, as it had in World War I. The best of the Allied mobile forces, the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) and the French Seventh Army, now moved forward into Belgium to take up previously-planned positions along the Meuse and Dyle Rivers. Their advance was screened by the four Hurricane squadrons of the Air Component of the BEF, a few Hurricane squadrons from No. 11 Group in England, and three units of French fighters. The JG 26 fighter sweeps encountered several large formations of Allied fighters. The Curtiss Hawk 75As of GC I/4 were escorting a French column on the Antwerp-Breda road when they were attacked at 1730 hours by III/JG 26, apparently in full Gruppe strength. The Gruppe claimed five Hawks for no losses. Later that evening the Hawks were hit over Antwerp by the Second Gruppe, which claimed three Hawks without loss. For the day GC I/4 claimed three certain victories and one probable victory over the Bf 109s, but lost its commander and one pilot killed and one pilot captured wounded. Two more

pilots returned to base with injuries. Many of the returning Hawks were seriously damaged by the Messerschmitts' gunfire.

Fighters of the 2nd Staffel encountered French MS 406 fighters in the Antwerp area. The Staffel destroyed one of the Moranes, but lost Fw. Gerhard Herzog, who was shot down, fell into the hands of the BEF, and was spirited across the Channel, fated to spend the rest of the war in Canada. Herzog had served in Spain under the name Gerhard Halupczok, changing his name to the more Teutonic Herzog in the spring of 1940. He became the Geschwader's first combat loss of the Western campaign. Another 2nd Staffel pilot had to force-land his plane after this combat, but was able to return to his unit.

Geschwader formations remained active over The Netherlands. The 5th Staffel's Kapitän, Oblt. von Holtey, force-landed with injuries near the Zuider Zee after his aircraft was hit by flak. According to Dutch records he was taken prisoner, but was released after the Dutch surrender.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 11 May 1940

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
5/11/40	Fw.	Biegert	2	2	Morane 406	S of Antwerp	6:10 PM		yes
5/11/40	Lt.	Hilleke	II St	1	Hawk 75A	Antwerp	7:10 PM	GC I/4	unk
5/11/40	Hptm.	Knüppel	II CO	1	Hawk 75A	Antwerp	7:10 PM	GC I/4	yes
5/11/40		6. Staffel	6	1	Hawk 75A	Antwerp	7:10 PM	GC I/4	yes
5/11/40	Maj.	Berg v.	III CO	1	Hawk 75A	unknown	5:45 PM	GC I/4	yes
5/11/40	Lt.	Müncheberg	III St	2	Hawk 75A	NNE of Antwerp	5:45 PM	GC I/4	yes
5/11/40	Oblt.	Beyer	7 CO	1	Hawk 75A	NE of Antwerp	5:30 PM	GC I/4	yes
5/11/40	Lt.	Sprick	8	2	Hawk 75A	unknown	7:30 PM	GC I/4	yes
5/11/40	Fw.	Eberz	9	1	Hawk 75A	NE of Antwerp	5:30 PM	GC I/4	yes

12 May

German fighters were called on to perform only two major types of mission during this campaign; they lacked the training, doctrine, or equipment for anything else. The favorite mission of the Jagdwaffe was the "freie Jagd", or free hunt, which was simply a fighter sweep without escort responsibilities. Their other major assignment was the "Jagdschutz", which translates as "fighter protection"; this was a patrol of a specified area of the front, protection being offered to any friendly bombers or reconnaissance aircraft encountered. Escort missions were ordered and flown later in the campaign, but these were just another form of patrol; at this time the Jagdwaffe lacked any escort methodology. The patrols flown on this day failed to contact enemy aircraft; one 2nd Staffel Messerschmitt force-landed at Waalhaven airfield with flak damage.

13 May

The Stab, the Third Gruppe, and the attached III/JG 3 moved forward to Mönchen-Gladbach near the Dutch border, while the Second Gruppe moved to Ürdingen, also nearer the front. Von Bock continued his push through northern Belgium, while von Rundstedt's armor spearheads reached the Meuse River around Sedan, almost unnoticed, and began crossing on a wide front. Von Bock's forces played their diversionary role well, advancing in such strength that all available Allied air forces were drawn to oppose them. RAF Fighter Command's newest day fighters, the Supermarine Spitfire and the Boulton-Paul Defiant, saw combat over Europe for the first time – against JG 26.

Six No. 264 Sqd. Defiants and six No. 66 Sqd. Spitfires took off from eastern-

most England early in the morning to attack Ju 52s grounded on the beach near The Hague. The RAF fighter pilots spotted Ju 87Bs dive bombing a railroad line, and attacked them successfully, but were then hit by the Messerschmitts of the 5th Staffel, and were severely punished. The Staffel claimed victories over seven Spitfires and one Defiant; the true British losses were one Spitfire and five Defiants. Fighter Command did not again send its aircraft over the Netherlands. The Defiants did manage to shoot down one Bf 109E, that of Lt. Karl Borris. Borris bailed out west of Dordrecht, landed in a deserted polder with injuries, and made it back to his Staffel on 17 May.

At dawn the Dutch Air Force flew one of its final sorties. The last operational Fokker T5 medium bomber took off from Schiphol at 0519 to bomb the Moerdijk bridge, escorted by two Fokker G1 twin-boomed fighters. The bomber made two runs on the bridge at low altitude, but failed to damage it. The three aircraft attempted return to Schiphol at minimum altitude, but were hit by the 4th Staffel near Dordrecht, and the T5 and one G1 were shot down in flames by the 4th's Kapitän, Oblt. Karl Ebbighausen.

Aircraft of the First Gruppe were also active. Bf 109s from the 1st Staffel attacked six MS 406s of GC III/3 over Breda in the Netherlands. The French fighters had just intercepted a German medium bomber formation under the cover of a rain squall. Lt. Eberhard Henrici shot down one Morane whose pilot was able to make a forced landing and reach the French lines. The commander of the French formation fought a prolonged, lone battle before ramming a Messerschmitt and crashing to his death. The 1st Staffel lost three aircraft in this engagement – Uffz. Hermann Speck and Gefr. Günther Langner were killed, and Fw. Max Frank was injured and imprisoned (temporarily) by the Dutch. Later that evening the 1st Staffel's Lt. Friedrich Butterweck encountered a Potez 63 of GAO 501 on a reconnaissance mission south of Tilburg and shot it down.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 13 May 1940

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
5/13/40	Lt.	Henrici	1	1	Morane 406	S of Breda	10:50 AM	GC III/3	yes
5/13/40	Lt.	Butterweck	1	1	Potez 63	Peppel/S of Tilburg	6:38 PM	GAO 501	yes
5/13/40	Hptm.	Ebbighausen	4 CO	1	Fokker T5	Dordrecht	7:18 AM	BomVA	yes
5/13/40	Hptm.	Ebbighausen	4 CO	2	Fokker G1	Dordrecht	7:20 AM	1-4 JaVA	yes
5/13/40	Lt.	Krug	5	1	Spitfire	Waalhaven	6:45 AM	66+264 Sqd	yes
5/13/40	Fw.	Meyer W.	5	1	Spitfire	Dordrecht	6:45 AM	66+264 Sqd	yes
5/13/40	Lt.	Roch	5	3	Spitfire	Dordrecht	6:45 AM	66+264 Sqd	yes
5/13/40	Uffz.	Wemhöner	5	1	Spitfire	Dordrecht	6:46 AM	66+264 Sqd	yes
5/13/40	Lt.	Roch	5	2	Spitfire	Rotterdam	6:50 AM	66+264 Sqd	yes
5/13/40	Lt.	Krug	5	2	Spitfire	Dordrecht	6:55 AM	66+264 Sqd	yes
5/13/40	Fw.	Stolz	5	1	Defiant	Dordrecht	7:00 AM	264 Sqd	yes
5/13/40	Lt.	Roch	5	1	Spitfire	Rotterdam	7:05 AM	66+264 Sqd	yes

14 May

The German victory was assured on this date. The Allies vainly attacked von Rundstedt's Meuse bridgeheads with all available air forces. The Jagdgeschwader of von Massow's Jafü 3 flew 814 interception sorties and claimed eighty-nine Allied aircraft downed in what became known as the "Day of the Fighters". By day's end, the British and French bomber squadrons had been reduced to impotence. The Germans continued to pour their armor across the Meuse toward the Channel coast, virtually unimpeded by air or ground attacks

against their flanks. The Allied units to the north were heavily engaged by von Bock's Army Group B, and could not turn to face the new threat in their rear. The Germans had sprung their trap and had caught the best of the Allied ground formations in it.

On the 14th the Schlageter fighters were busy supporting von Bock's own attempt at a breakthrough, in the Gembloux gap between the Dyle and Meuse River lines. Only the Third Gruppe engaged in air combat. At 1825 the 8th Staffel claimed two MS 406s, while at 1845 the Gruppe Stabsschwarm and the 7th Staffel wiped out a section of Hurricanes of No. 504 Sqd., which was seeing its first action since joining the BEF Air Component on 12 May. The British fighters were patrolling Louvain when they spotted He 111s and attacked; they were hit in turn by the Messerschmitts, which knocked down all four Hurricanes. The squadron leader and a second pilot were killed; a third pilot crash-landed with injuries, while the fourth bailed out and returned to duty.

II/JG 2, based temporarily at Peer, Belgium, was attached to the Geschwader, giving Major Wick command of four Gruppen.

The day also brought the capitulation of the Netherlands, which permitted the Luftwaffe units still engaged in that nation, including I/JG 26, to join the main battle.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 14 May 1940

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
5/14/40	Lt.	Westphal	III St	1	Hurricane	E of Ath		504 Sqd	unk
5/14/40	Lt.	Müncheberg	III St	3	Hurricane	E of Ath		504 Sqd	yes
5/14/40	Lt.	Blume	7	1	Hurricane	Brussels	6:45 PM	504 Sqd	yes
5/14/40	Lt.	Müller-Dühe	7	1	Hurricane	Brussels	6:45 PM	504 Sqd	yes
5/14/40	Uffz.	Grzymalla	8	1	Morane 406	unknown			unk
5/14/40	Oblt.	Wendt	8 CO	1	Morane 406	unknown	6:25 PM		yes

15 May

Third Gruppe aircraft had two encounters with No. 3 Squadron of the BEF Air Component. At 1300 two sections of Hurricanes patrolling Namur-Dinant attacked seven Do 17Zs and were then chased back to base by Bf 109s. Lt. Müncheberg, the Third Gruppe adjutant, shot down one of the Hurricanes near Overjise, killing its pilot. Later that afternoon another No. 3 Sqd. patrol engaged 9th Staffel aircraft near Lille and claimed two destroyed and one probable without loss. The Staffel actually lost one aircraft; its pilot was uninjured.

I/JG 26 moved forward on this date to Eindhoven in The Netherlands.

16 May

The Second Gruppe was involved in an air battle east of Lille that resulted in three victory claims and one fatality, Fw. Erwin Stolz of the 5th Staffel. Two 4th Staffel aircraft force-landed out of fuel, suffering minor damage. The Gruppe's opponents are a mystery; two Moranes and a Curtiss Hawk were claimed, but the French reported no losses in this area. It is possible that this combat was with the RAF's No. 615 Sqd., which claimed one Messerschmitt while losing three Hurricanes. The 9th Staffel's Uffz. Martin Schröpfer was shot down on an escort mission to Brussels and was spirited across the Channel to POW camp this same day. His victorious opponent is listed in various sources as a Morane, a Hawk, or a Hurricane.

17 May

The 4th Staffel lost one Messerschmitt during the day; its wounded but unidentified pilot destroyed his aircraft during a crash-landing at Bruges. In late afternoon the 6th Staffel shot down a bomb-carrying Lysander of No. 16 Squadron, and the 8th Staffel claimed three Moranes near the unlocated village of "Gramont". No suitable French losses have been traced, and the victims may have been Hurricanes of No. 17 Sqd. and No. 245 Sqd., each of which lost one aircraft south of Brussels.

Three of the Geschwader's attached Gruppen transferred to new bases: III/JG 3 moved to St. Trond, II/JG 2 moved to Tirlemont, and III/JG 26 replaced II/JG 2 at Peer.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 15–17 May 1940

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
5/15/40	Lt.	Müncheberg	III CO	4	Hurricane	Overijse	1:00 PM	3 Sqd	yes
5/15/40	Oblt.	Fronhöfer	9	1	Mureaux	unknown	8:35 AM		yes
5/16/40	Lt.	Hilleke	II St	2	Hawk 75A	Lille	4:50 PM		yes
5/16/40	Hptm.	Knüppel	II CO	2	Morane 406	Seclin	4:50 PM		yes
5/16/40	Uffz.	Dahmer	4	1	Morane 406	Tournai	4:31 PM		unk
5/16/40	Uffz.	Brügelmann	8	1	Mureaux	unknown	1:45 PM		yes
5/17/40	Lt.	Kosse	6	1	Lysander	Mons	6:30 PM	16 Sqd	yes
5/17/40	Lt.	Ripke	8	1	Morane 406	unknown			unk
5/17/40	Lt.	Ebeling	8	1	Morane 406	Gramont	6:30 PM		yes
5/17/40	Lt.	Sprick	8	3	Morane 406	unknown	6:30 PM		yes



A Second Gruppe groundcrewman and the remains of a Belgian Air Force observation plane. The ground staff had just reached Neerhespen-Landen by Ju 52 when this photo was taken on 18 May 1940. (*Meyer*)

18 May

The Gruppen of the Geschwader now found themselves supporting von Kleist's Panzer Group in its drive to the Channel. The armor, part of von Rundstedt's Army Group A, had cut diagonally across von Bock's front.

The Second Gruppe was credited with shooting down twelve Allied fighters in the Douai-Cambrai area between 1615 and 1630 that afternoon – ten MS 406s, one Hawk 75A, and one Hurricane – for the loss of one 4th Staffel Bf

109E-3, whose pilot, Obfw. Heinz Heidenpeter, bailed out, was captured by Moroccan troops, and was freed by the army on the 21st. Again, the French units cannot be determined, and this battle must in fact have been with RAF Hurricanes. All French Air Force units had withdrawn behind the Aisne River, and were not flying in this area. Luftwaffe fighter pilots were never very good at aircraft identification, and in all probability exhaustion was also beginning to take a toll on the pilots' mental skills. Apparently the battle began with an attack by I/ZG 26 and II/JG 26 on the BEF airfield at Vitry-en-Artois, which is a few miles west of Douai. The field was occupied by a number of the "half-squadrons" of Fighter Command Hurricanes that had just begun flying from France during daylight and returning to England in the evening. Eight Hurricanes from five different squadrons were shot down or forced to crash-land. The Bf 110 crews of I/ZG 26 claimed several of these, so there was obviously some multiple claiming. Later in the day the airfield was bombed by Do 17s and strafed by another Gruppe of Bf 110s. That night, after the surviving UK-based aircraft had returned to England, the permanent airbase staff evacuated to Norrent-Fontes.

The Geschwader continued to move forward behind the advancing troops. On this day the Stab, the Second Gruppe, and III/JG 3 all transferred to Neerhespen-Landen in Belgium.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 18 May 1940

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
5/18/40	Lt.	Hilleke	II St	3	Morane 406	Cambrai	4:30 PM		yes
5/18/40	Hptm.	Knüppel	II CO	3	Morane 406	Cambrai	4:30 PM		yes
5/18/40	Fw.	Hoffmann H.	4	1	Morane 406	Cambrai	4:15 PM		yes
5/18/40	Oblt.	Roos	4	1	Morane 406	Douai	4:20 PM		yes
5/18/40	Hptm.	Ebbighausen	4 CO	3	Morane 406	Douai	4:30 PM		yes
5/18/40	Fw.	Roth	4	1	Hurricane	Tournai	4:35 PM		yes
5/18/40	Lt.	Roch	5	4	Morane 406	Cambrai	4:20 PM		yes
5/18/40	Fw.	Meyer W.	5	2	Morane 406	Douai	4:20 PM		yes
5/18/40	Lt.	Schneider W.	5	1	Hawk 75A	Douai	4:35 PM		yes
5/18/40	Oblt.	Pomaska	6 CO	1	Morane 406	Cambrai	4:20 PM		yes
5/18/40	Lt.	Blohm	6	1	Morane 406	Douai	4:30 PM		yes
5/18/40	Lt.	Kosse	6	2	Morane 406	Cambrai	4:30 PM		yes

19 May

The Luftwaffe continued its pressure on the BEF's few remaining airbases in France. Today it was the turn of the fields around Lille. The activities of III/JG 26 are a matter of conjecture owing to a lack of times in the existing German records, but apparently at 1100 a number of Bf 109s from I/LG 2 and III/JG 26 hit Lille-Marck. The battle drifted to the east; the 9th Staffel ultimately claimed two Hurricanes downed northeast of Courtrai, while losing Lt. Helmut Brucks, who bailed out successfully but was taken prisoner by the British. The Gruppe's opponents came from Nos. 85, 87, and 504 Squadrons. A late patrol of the same area by the Second Gruppe Stabsschwarm and the 4th Staffel resulted in the Geschwader's most serious loss of the war to date. The Second Gruppe's Kommandeur, Hptm. Herwig Knüppel, one of the original "Spaniards", and with three recent victories the most successful JG 26 unit leader, was shot down and killed. Oblt. Karl Ebbighausen, Kapitän of 4/JG 26 and another successful air fighter, was injured on the same mission, but was named Knüppel's temporary replacement. Apparently both pilots were the victims of No. 615

Sqd.'s F/O Tony Eyre, whose two probable claims are the only RAF matches in time and location. His section of four Hurricanes attacked fifteen Bf 109s northeast of Tournai at 2040. Another No. 615 Sqd. pilot was shot down after holing a 4th Staffel aircraft; the Englishman bailed out with injuries, while the German was able to return to base.

Base movements continued. The Third Gruppe transferred to Beauvechain, east of Brussels, while the newly-attached II/JG 27 moved to St. Trond.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 19 May 1940

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
5/19/40	Fw.	Roth	4	2	Hurricane	Tournai	8:40 PM		yes
5/19/40	Uffz.	Wemhöner	5	2	Hawk 75A	Roubaix	5:40 PM		yes
5/19/40	Lt.	Krug	5		Hurricane	Lille	8:30 PM		unk
5/19/40	Fw.	Grzymalla	8	2	Potez 63	unknown			unk
5/19/40	Uffz.	Eberz	9	2	Hurricane	NE of Courtrai			unk
5/19/40	Oblt.	Schöpfel	9 CO	1	Hurricane	NE of Courtrai			unk



Third Gruppe pilots awaiting orders during the Western campaign. Clockwise from left: Lt. Walter Blume (POW 18 Aug 40), Lt. Werner Bartels (POW 24 Jul 40), Lt. Josef Schauff (KIA 24 Jul 40), Lt. Klaus Mietusch (KIA 17 Sep 44), Oblt. Gerhard Schöpfel, Lt. Gerhard Mueller-Dühe (KIA 18 Aug 40), Lt. Gustav Sprick (KIA 28 Jun 41) (front) – Chièvres, late May 1940. (*Schöpfel*)

21 May

The 7th Staffel's Uffz. Hans-Dieter Rudolph was severely injured by flak west of Lille; his aircraft was destroyed in the crash-landing.

23 May

I/JG 26, still subordinated to JG 51, transferred to Antwerp.



Third Gruppe engine maintenance "in the field" at Chièvres – late May 1940. (*Buchholz*)

24 May

The British Expeditionary Force began establishing a defensive perimeter around Dunkirk, its one remaining port. The Royal Navy prepared for the evacuation. RAF Fighter Command was instructed to provide as much protection as possible to the Army without jeopardizing its ability to defend the home island. Over the next few days, single RAF fighter squadrons were ordered to sweep the coast from Boulogne to Ostend. The Luftwaffe fighters normally patrolled in Gruppe formations of forty aircraft, thus outnumbering the British whenever the two sides met. The RAF, whose largest tactical unit contained only a dozen fighters, was slow to counter with larger formations, and lacked the doctrine and communications equipment to make good use of them. In mid-afternoon the Second Gruppe struck No. 74 Squadron over Dunkirk as the latter was attacking a formation of He 111s, and shot down three Spitfires without loss.

25 May

The JG 26 Geschwaderstab and the attached II/JG 2 transferred to Quevaucamps, a temporary airfield in far western Belgium.

27 May

On the first day of the Dunkirk evacuation the Second Gruppe reported another successful encounter with Spitfires, claiming three over Ostend in the afternoon, once more without loss. British records show no matching combats for the Spitfire squadrons, and the combat was probably with Hurricanes of Nos. 17 and 605 Sqds., which flew a mixed patrol that crossed the coast east of Dunkirk. Six Do 17s were attacked and one was set on fire before the Hurricanes were

struck by an estimated fifty Bf 110s and Bf 109s and had to flee in the clouds. No. 605 Squadron's leader and another pilot were killed by Bf 109s.

The Third Gruppe moved to Chièvres, while the attached III/JG 3 moved to Mauriaux, near Maubeuge in northeastern France.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 24-27 May 1940

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
5/24/40	Hptm.	Ebbighausen	II CO	4	Spitfire	Dunkirk	4:55 PM	74 Sqd	yes
5/24/40	Lt.	Hilleke	II St	4	Spitfire	Dunkirk	4:55 PM	74 Sqd	yes
5/24/40	Fw.	März	5	1	Spitfire	Dunkirk	4:50 PM	74 Sqd	yes
5/27/40	Uffz.	Philipp	4	1	Spitfire	Ostend	5:30 PM		yes
5/27/40	Fw.	Lüders	6	1	Spitfire	Ostend	4:32 PM		yes
5/27/40	Fw.	Lüders	6	2	Spitfire	Ostend	5:40 PM		yes

28 May

All of the Geschwader's organic Gruppen, plus at least II/JG 3 of the attached units, were active over Dunkirk. At about 1030 the First Gruppe engaged a large formation of Spitfires in a violent battle over the Channel east of Dunkirk. The Spitfires were from the three Hornchurch squadrons, Nos. 19, 65, and 616, attempting their first mission in Wing strength. The First Gruppe claimed six victories, but only two were confirmed. Only No. 616 Sqd. suffered losses, one Spitfire force-landing on the beach at Dunkirk while two made crash-landings back in England. The 2nd Staffel's Fw. Ernst Biegert bailed out over the beach at St. Pol-sur-Mer, but died in the hospital of his injuries. Biegert, one of the best of the Gruppe's non-commissioned pilots, had seen service in Spain and had already scored two victories in the western campaign.

At 1230 the Second and Third Gruppen were involved in a large battle off Ostend with the three Hurricane squadrons from Biggin Hill, Nos. 213, 229, and 242. The RAF units lost six Hurricanes and claimed seven Bf 109s, one Bf 110, and one Ju 88. The two JG 26 Gruppen claimed two Spitfires and five Hurricanes, while suffering no losses.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 28 May 1940

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
5/28/40	Fw.	Hegenauer	1	1	Spitfire	Dover-Ostend			unk
5/28/40	Oblt.	Losigkeit	2 CO	1	Spitfire	Dover-Ostend			unk
5/28/40	Uffz.	Richter J.	2		Spitfire	Dover-Ostend			unk
5/28/40	Fw.	Vielhaber	2		Spitfire	Dover-Ostend			unk
5/28/40	Uffz.	Burkhardt A.	3	1	Spitfire	Dover-Ostend	10:42 AM	616 Sqd	yes
5/28/40	Oblt.	Seifert	3 CO	2	Spitfire	Dover-Ostend			unk
5/28/40	Lt.	Gruel	3	1	Spitfire	Dover-Ostend	10:43 AM	616 Sqd	yes
5/28/40	Lt.	Ruppert K.	3	1	Spitfire	Dover-Ostend			unk
5/28/40	Uffz.	Philipp	4	2	Spitfire	Channel Narrows	12:30 PM		yes
5/28/40	Uffz.	Dahmer	4	2	Spitfire	Thames Estuary	12:50 PM		yes
5/28/40	Lt.	Schneider W.	5	2	Hurricane	Channel Narrows	12:33 PM	213+229+ 242 Sqd	yes
5/28/40	Oblt.	Beyer	7 CO	2	Hurricane	Ostend	12:30 PM	213+229+ 242 Sqd	yes
5/28/40	Lt.	Müller-Dühe	7	2	Hurricane	Ostend	12:30 PM	213+229+ 242 Sqd	yes
5/28/40	Lt.	Ebeling	8	2	Hurricane	NW of Ostend	12:25 PM	213+229+ 242 Sqd	yes
5/28/40	Uffz.	Jäckel K.	8	1	Hurricane	Ostend	12:25 PM	213+229+ 242 Sqd	yes

29 May

The skies over Dunkirk were cloudy and overcast. Air combats were small in scale until late afternoon, when the largest RAF formation yet assembled arrived to fly the cover patrol. Two Hurricane squadrons, Nos. 229 and 242, were at 10,000 feet, while the Spitfires of Nos. 64 and 610 Squadrons flew at 25,000 feet. The two forces were too far apart for effective support, and were bounced by two Gruppen of JG 26, plus III/JG 3. III/JG 26 struck the Hurricanes first, from out of the clouds. Before the Spitfires could intervene, they too were struck by a superior number of Messerschmitts, these from Hptm. Ebbighausen's Second Gruppe. During the next half hour, ten British fighters went down; four Spitfires were claimed by II/JG 26 and four more by III/JG 3; five "Spitfires" (actually Hurricanes) were credited to III/JG 26. The scattered British fighters made their way back to England as best they could, having lost one-fourth of their number. While the British fighters were engaged, the German Stukas made their most effective attack of the week on the destroyers and transports of the evacuation force, entirely unhindered by the RAF. The Schlager Geschwader's success was won without loss, although the four British squadrons involved were credited with the destruction of fifteen Bf 109s – Fighter Command claims during the evacuation exceeded true Luftwaffe losses by a factor of about four to one.



A Second Gruppe motor column during May or June 1940 – the only time the Geschwader took part in a Blitzkrieg campaign. (*Van Boxem via Vanoverbeke*)

As the fighter battle was winding down, pilots of the Second Gruppe saw two Coastal Command Ansons patrolling off Zeebrugge, and shot both down, although their victories, apparently unwitnessed, were not confirmed.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 29 May 1940

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
5/29/40	Lt.	Hilleke	II St	5	Anson	Channel Narrows	7:05 PM	48+500 Sqd	no
5/29/40	Uffz.	Philipp	4	3	Spitfire	Dover	6:45 PM	64+229+ 610 Sqd	yes
5/29/40	Fw.	Roth	4	3	Spitfire	Dunkirk	6:50 PM	64+229+ 610 Sqd	yes
5/29/40	Fw.	Hoffmann H.	4	2	Spitfire	Dunkirk	6:55 PM	64+229+ 610 Sqd	yes
5/29/40	Uffz.	Dahmer	4	3	Spitfire	Dover	7:00 PM	64+229+ 610 Sqd	yes
5/29/40	Fw.	Meyer W.	5	3	Anson	Channel Narrows	7:05 PM	48+500 Sqd	no
5/29/40	Maj.	Berg v.	III CO	2	Spitfire	W of Dunkirk	6:10 PM	64+229+ 610 Sqd	yes
5/29/40	Lt.	Müncheberg	III St	5	Spitfire	W of Dunkirk	6:10 PM	64+229+ 610 Sqd	yes
5/29/40	Oblt.	Fronhöfer	9	2	Spitfire	W of Dunkirk	6:10 PM	64+229+ 610 Sqd	yes
5/29/40	Lt.	Haiböck	9	1	Spitfire	W of Dunkirk	6:10 PM	64+229+ 610 Sqd	yes
5/29/40	Oblt.	Schöpfel	9 CO	2	Spitfire	W of Dunkirk	6:10 PM	64+229+ 610 Sqd	yes

30 May

Bad weather hampered air operations over Dunkirk; the evacuation continued under the cover of a thick fog bank. II/JG 27, one of the Gruppen attached to JG 26, transferred on this date to Brussels-Evère.

31 May

JG 26's three organic Gruppen, and all three of the attached Gruppen, saw combat over Dunkirk. The time of the First Gruppe's patrol, which was led by Hptm. Handrick, is uncertain. It was hit from the rear by Hurricanes, which downed two Messerschmitts, killing the Gruppe adjutant, Oblt. Kurt Pielmeyer, who was flying as Handrick's wingman, and Uffz. Josef Richter. The Gruppe claimed one Spitfire during the day, but it was not confirmed. The Gruppe's pilots blamed the losses on Handrick, who reportedly took no action after being warned of the attack, but continued flying straight ahead. The Second Gruppe battled Fighter Command's noon patrol, and shot down one No. 245 Sqd. Hurricane without loss.

The day's major successes belonged to the Third Gruppe. The mid-afternoon RAF patrol comprised No. 609, 213, and 264 Squadrons, flying Spitfires, Hurricanes, and Defiants respectively. At 1520 the Defiant crews saw a large formation of He 111s, and turned toward it. As the bombers fled, the British fighters were hit by an estimated "seventy" Bf 109s of III/JG 26, diving from the sun. The Germans burst through No. 213 Sqd. at 15,000 feet and continued down to No. 264 Sqd. at 10,000 feet. The Defiants entered a defensive circle; the Messerschmitts downed one of them, and two of the Defiants then collided and crashed. Five Hurricanes were also shot down. The Gruppe claimed nine "Hurricanes" versus an actual loss of three Defiants and five Hurricanes. The RAF pilots claimed nine Bf 109s, and actually accounted for two. Lt. Walter Hütter-Walleck was killed. Uffz. Helmut Brügelmann was shot in the hand and bailed out over the Channel; he was captured, but was released when Dunkirk was taken by the Germans. No. 609 Squadron's Spitfires remained high above this battle until a section dove after some He 111s; the 9th Staffel then shot one of them down, claiming two.

The Third Gruppe Stab Rotte of Maj. von Berg and Lt. Müncheberg shot down two Lysander liaison aircraft during the day. Müncheberg also downed a No. 609 Sqd. Spitfire on the late-evening patrol, giving him the unprecedented total of four claims for the day; his nine victories for the war to date led the Geschwader by a wide margin.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 31 May 1940

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
5/31/40	Lt.	Ulenberg	2	1	Spitfire	near Dunkirk			
5/31/40	Fw.	Lüders	6	3	Hurricane	7km NW of Nieupoort	1:00 PM	245 Sqd	unk
5/31/40	Lt.	Müncheberg	III St	6	Lysander	Furnes-Dunkirk	3:35 PM		yes
5/31/40	Maj.	Berg v.	III CO	3	Hurricane	SW of Dunkirk	3:40 PM	213+264	
5/31/40	Lt.	Müncheberg	III St	7	Hurricane	SW of Dunkirk	3:40 PM	Sqd	yes
5/31/40	Lt.	Müncheberg	III St	8	Hurricane	NE of Dunkirk	3:45 PM	213+264	yes
5/31/40	Lt.	Müncheberg	III St	9	Spitfire	Channel-Dunkirk	8:10 PM	Sqd	yes
5/31/40	Maj.	Berg v.	III CO	4	Lysander	unknown	8:20 PM	609 Sqd	unk
5/31/40	Oblt.	Beyer	7 CO	3	Hurricane	Dunkirk	3:40 PM	213+264	yes
5/31/40	Lt.	Mietusch	7	1	Hurricane	Dunkirk	3:40 PM	Sqd	yes
5/31/40	Obfw.	Öttering	7	1	Hurricane	Dunkirk	3:40 PM	213+264	yes
5/31/40	Lt.	Ebeling	8	3	Hurricane	Dunkirk	3:45 PM	Sqd	unk
5/31/40	Fw.	Grzymalla	8	3	Hurricane	Dunkirk	3:45 PM	213+264	yes
5/31/40	Uffz.	Busch E.	9	1	Hurricane	Dunkirk	3:40 PM	Sqd	yes
5/31/40	Lt.	Haiböck	9	2	Spitfire	Dunkirk	3:40 PM	213+264	unk
5/31/40	Oblt.	Schöpfel	9 CO	3	Spitfire	Dunkirk	3:40 PM	Sqd	unk
								609 Sqd	yes
								609 Sqd	unk

JG 26 Casualties: 10–31 May 1940

Date	Rank	Name	Cas	Unit	Aircraft	WNr	Mkgs	Place	Time	Cause
5/10/40	Lt.	Ludewig, Wolfgang	WIA	9	Bf 109E-1			SW of The Hague		flak
5/11/40	Fw.	Herzog, Gerhard	POW	2	Bf 109E-3			SW of Antwerp		Moranc
5/11/40	Oblt.	Holtey, Hubertus von	WIA	5 CO	Bf 109E			S of Zuider Zee		406+flak
5/13/40	Gefr.	Langner, Günther	KIA	1	Bf 109E			near Werkendam		flak
5/13/40	Uffz.	Speck, Hermann	KIA	1	Bf 109E-1			N of Breda	8:30 AM	RAF fighter
5/13/40	Fw.	Frank, Max	WIA	1	Bf 109E-3			near Breda	8:30 AM	Moranc 406
5/13/40	Lt.	Borris, Karl	WIA	5	Bf 109E-3			near Dordrecht	7:00 AM	Moranc 406
5/16/40	Fw.	Stolz, Erwin	KIA	5	Bf 109E-1			E of Lille		Defiant
5/16/40	Uffz.	Schröpfer, Martin	POW	9	Bf 109E-1			NE of Brussels		Hurricane
5/18/40	Obfw.	Heidenpeter, Heinz	POW (temp)	4	Bf 109E-3			W of Douai		Hurricane
5/19/40	Hptm.	Knüppel, Herwig	KIA	II CO	Bf 109E-3	1542		near Lille	8:05 PM	Hurricane
5/19/40	Lt.	Brucks, Helmut	POW	9	Bf 109E-3			NE of Courtrai		Hurricane
5/19/40	Hptm.	Ebbighausen, Karl	WIA	4 CO	Bf 109E-3			E of Lille	8:05 PM	Hurricane
5/21/40	Uffz.	Rudolph, Hans-Dieter	WIA	7	Bf 109E			W of Lille		flak
5/28/40	Fw.	Biegert, Ernst	KIA	2	Bf 109E-1			St Pol/NW of Calais		Spitfire
5/31/40	Uffz.	Richter, Josef	KIA	2	Bf 109E-1			Wuelpes/Dunkirk		Hurricane
5/31/40	Lt.	Hütter-Walleck, Walter	KIA	7	Bf 109E-1			Dunkirk		Hurricane
5/31/40	Oblt.	Pielmeyer, Kurt	KIA	I St	Bf 109E-3			nr Ostend/St Georges		Hurricane
5/31/40	Uffz.	Brügelmann, Helmut	WIA	8	Bf 109E-1			Dunkirk		Hurricane



A 6th Staffel Bf 109E-3 after making a belly landing in a Belgian field on 1 June. (*Dölling via Rasse*)

1 June

All morning the Luftwaffe mounted heavy attacks on the beachhead and off-shore shipping. At 0630 the First Gruppe swept across the beaches and then came to the aid of some Bf 110s that were under attack by the RAF's dawn patrol of Spitfires from Nos. 19, 222, and 616 Squadrons. Two Spitfires were claimed for the loss of Lt. Siegfried Gruel, who was killed, and Oblt. Rudolf Germeroth, who force-landed with such severe injuries that he never returned to the unit. The Second Gruppe had more success against the RAF's noon patrol of three low-strength Hurricane squadrons, claiming seven RAF aircraft in some of the heaviest fighting yet seen – only three of the German claims could be confirmed. The 6th Staffel was bounced from out of the clouds and lost Hptm. Alfred Pomaska, who was killed, and Obfw. Paul Keller, who was put out of action for many months. The Third Gruppe lost a plane and pilot under unclear circumstances, possibly hit by a French MS 406 while making a transfer flight; the German pilot was taken prisoner and released after the armistice. Several more Geschwader aircraft were lost or damaged without harm to their pilots.

Oblt. Walter Schneider replaced Pomaska as Kapitän of the 6th Staffel. Notable additions to the Geschwader's roster of pilots were Hptm. Erich Noack, who joined the Second Gruppe Stab from instructor duty with orders to take over the Gruppe from Hptm. Ebbighausen; and Uffz. Emil Babenz, who joined the First Gruppe from flight school. II/JG 27 and II/JG 3 were detached from the Geschwader's operational control on this date.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 1 June 1940

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
6/1/40	Oblt.	Losigkeit	2 CO	2	Spitfire	near Dunkirk	6:40 AM	19+222+ 616 Sqd	yes
6/1/40	Uffz.	Wolf	3	1	Spitfire	near Dunkirk	6:36 AM	19+222+ 616 Sqd	yes

6/1/40	Fw.	Roth	4	4	Hurricane	Dunkirk	12:50 PM	43+145+ 245 Sqd	yes
6/1/40	Lt.	Krug	5	3	Hurricane	Dunkirk	12:35 PM	43+145+ 245 Sqd	unk
6/1/40	Uffz.	Wemhöner	5	3	Hurricane	Dunkirk	12:40 PM	43+145+ 245 Sqd	unk
6/1/40	Lt.	Borris	5	1	Spitfire	Dunkirk	12:42 PM		unk
6/1/40	Uffz.	Wemhöner	5	4	Hurricane	Dunkirk	12:48 PM	43+145+ 245 Sqd	yes
6/1/40	Fw.	Nischik	6	1	Hurricane	Dunkirk	12:40 PM	43+145+ 245 Sqd	unk
6/1/40	Lt.	Kosse	6	3	Hurricane	Dunkirk	12:45 PM	43+145+ 245 Sqd	yes



The Second Gruppe's advance through France reached the English Channel at Dunkirk, close behind the victorious German Army. (*Reimers via Ebert*)

2 June

The Second and Third Gruppen arrived over Dunkirk at 0900, in time to join some Bf 110s in a massive battle with four RAF fighter squadrons that had succeeded in reaching an He 111 formation. The Bf 109 pilots claimed ten British fighters, without loss to themselves. The evacuation continued throughout the day. By nightfall nearly 350,000 Allied troops had reached England, and the beaches were empty of living men. Unexpectedly, the perimeter continued to hold, and additional troops were taken off over the next two days.

The men of the Geschwader turned their attention southward, to the continuation of the war against the French. I/JG 26 moved forward to Chièvres, where it joined the remainder of the Geschwader.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 2 June 1940

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
6/2/40	Lt.	Hilleke	II St	6	Hurricane	Dunkirk	9:20 AM	32 Sqd	yes
6/2/40	Lt.	Borris	5	2	Spitfire	Dunkirk	9:10 AM	66+266+ 611 Sqd	yes
6/2/40	Fw.	März	5	2	Spitfire	Dunkirk	9:30 AM	66+266+ 611 Sqd	yes

6/2/40	Lt.	Krug	5	4	Hurricane	Dunkirk	9:35 AM	32 Sqd	unk
6/2/40	Lt.	Kosse	6	4	Hurricane	Dunkirk	9:15 AM	32 Sqd	unk
6/2/40	Lt.	Blohm	6	2	Hurricane	Dunkirk	9:20 AM	32 Sqd	yes
6/2/40	Lt.	Sprick	8	4	Spitfire	unknown	9:25 AM	66+266+ 611 Sqd	yes
6/2/40	Uffz.	Busch E.	9	2	Hurricane	unknown	9:25 AM	32 Sqd	yes
6/2/40	Uffz.	Eberz	9	3	Spitfire	unknown	9:25 AM	66+266+ 611 Sqd	yes
6/2/40	Oblt.	Schöpfel	9 CO	4	Spitfire	unknown	9:25 AM	66+266+ 611 Sqd	unk

3 June

Three hundred bombers from Luftflotten 2 and 3 struck airfields around Paris. The French Air Force had devoted a large part of its fighter reserves to the defense of Paris, but they proved strangely ineffective. JG 26's Stab, First, and Second Gruppen formed part of the German armada's fighter escort, and found aerial targets elusive. Only three French fighters were claimed; losses were limited to the 4th Staffel's Fw. Willi Roth, who was downed by a Bloch 152 north of Paris and was held by the French until the armistice.

II/JG 2 was detached from JG 26's control, leaving the Geschwader with its three organic Gruppen under command.

4 June

The entire Geschwader moved to fields around Le Touquet, right on the Channel coast. They were now in position to assist the army's planned assault across the Somme. JG 26 was still in support of von Bock's Army Group B, on the right wing of the attack.

5 June

The 4th Staffel's Uffz. Paul Leisse failed to arrive at Le Touquet; he had been shot down by an unidentified fighter, and his grave was not located until September. The Geschwader's coastal airfields were deemed to be too exposed to hit-and-run attacks from Britain, and the Stab and the First and Second Gruppen moved inland a few miles.

6 June

The 8th Staffel's Lt. Gustav "Micky" Sprick was credited with downing three Bloch 152s; details are unknown.

On this date Hptm. Adolf Galland was ordered into the Geschwader from JG 27 to replace Major Ernst Freiherr von Berg as Kommandeur of the Third Gruppe. Von Berg left the Geschwader and received no further combat assignments. Galland's biography is too well-known to repeat here. He was already one of the Jagdwaffe's rising stars, having gained twelve air victories since the start of the Western campaign. His arrival proved to be one of the most significant events in the history of the Geschwader.

7 June

Fighter Command squadrons continued to stage through the few bases left to the RAF in northern France. Twenty Hurricanes of Nos. 43 and 601 Sqds. left Tangmere in the morning to fly from Rouen. No. 43 Sqd. was bounced by Bf 109s over the coast and lost four aircraft without returning fire. After landing at Rouen for servicing, the survivors took off again, this time meeting with more



A field of French medium tanks, abandoned after a futile attempt to prevent the Wehrmacht from crossing the Somme in early June. (Author's collection)

success. They waded into a large formation of bombers with Bf 109 and Bf 110 escort, and claimed five Luftwaffe aircraft, while losing three Hurricanes, all of whose pilots eventually returned to duty. These Bf 109s were from II/JG 26, which claimed four Hurricanes; only one claim was confirmed. Uffz. Wilhelm Philipp was lost temporarily to injuries, and the Gruppe suffered two fatalities: Uffz. Rudolf Iberle, who collided with an out-of-control Hurricane (German records) or a Bf 110 (British records), and Obfw. Friedrich Lorenz.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 3-7 June 1940

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
6/3/40	Fw.	Klein	3	1	Hawk 75A	S of Le Bourget	2:40 PM	GC I/5	yes
6/3/40	Fw.	Müller W.	3	1	Hawk 75A	E of Le Bourget	2:50 PM	GC I/5	yes
6/3/40	Fw.	Hoffmann H.	4	3	Morane 406	Paris	2:30 PM	GC I/6	unk
6/6/40	Lt.	Sprick	8	5	Bloch 152	unknown			unk
6/6/40	Lt.	Sprick	8	6	Bloch 152	unknown			unk
6/6/40	Lt.	Sprick	8	7	Bloch 152	unknown			unk
6/7/40	Uffz.	Philipp	4	4	Hurricane	Dieppe	7:30 PM	43 Sqd	unk
6/7/40	Uffz.	Dahmer	4	4	Hurricane	Dieppe	7:35 PM	43 Sqd	yes
6/7/40	Uffz.	Dahmer	4	5	Hurricane	Dieppe	7:40 PM	43 Sqd	unk
6/7/40	Uffz.	Iberle	4	1	Hurricane	20km SE of Dieppe		43 Sqd	unk

8 June

The situation in the air matched that on the ground – fluid, and somewhat chaotic. The First and Third Gruppen saw extensive combat. The Third Gruppe was engaged in escort duties in the morning, and claimed five Hurricanes, while losing Lt. Hermann Dörr (killed), Lt. Hermann Ripke (injured), and Lt. Klaus Mietusch, who survived his forced landing behind the French lines without injury but was then shot in the buttocks by a French civilian with a boar rifle. After the armistice Mietusch was sent to a hospital in Germany for treatment.

Early in the afternoon the First Gruppe downed two Battles, probably from No. 103 Sqd., and was then heavily involved with fighters, claiming three

Spitfires while losing two Messerschmitts: Lt. Walter Reimer was killed, while Fw. Alfred Burkhardt was temporarily imprisoned by the French.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 8 June 1940

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
6/8/40	Lt.	Ulenberg	2	2	Spitfire	S of Aurnaines			unk
6/8/40	Lt.	Ulenberg	2	3	Battle	N of Beauvais	2:50 PM	103 Sqd	yes
6/8/40	Fw.	Müller W.	3	2	Spitfire	Beauvais			unk
6/8/40	Fw.	Müller W.	3	3	Spitfire	Amiens	2:40 PM		yes
6/8/40	Oblt.	Seifert	3 CO	3	Battle	N of Beauvais		103 Sqd	unk
6/8/40	Lt.	Blume	7	2	Hurricane	Dunkirk			unk
6/8/40	Lt.	Schauff	8	1	Hurricane	unknown			unk
6/8/40	Uffz.	Busch E.	9	3	Hurricane	NW of Beauvais	10:30 AM		yes
6/8/40	Lt.	Haiböck	9	3	Hurricane	NW of Beauvais	10:30 AM		yes
6/8/40	Uffz.	Busch E.	9	4	Hurricane	Beauvais	10:40 AM		unk

9 June

Patrols continued in support of the army, which had now broken through the French Somme-Aisne defensive line. Oblt. Johannes Seifert of the 3rd Staffel shot down a Potez 63 reconnaissance aircraft near Rouen, but was himself injured, becoming the Geschwader's only casualty for the day. The Third Gruppe escorted Do 17s to Vernon in mid-afternoon and intercepted a formation of French fighters near Rouen. The Gruppe claimed three Morane MS 406s without loss; the opposing formation was probably GC 1/145, whose Polish pilots were flying their first combat mission in light-weight Caudron C 714 fighters. The Poles lost seven aircraft, and three pilots killed, while making no claims.

11 June

According to his logbook Adolf Galland flew his first mission with the Third Gruppe on this date, an uneventful late-evening escort of He 111s to bomb the train station in Conches. No fighters were encountered, but heavy flak was reported.

Two Second Gruppe members were killed in the crash of the Gruppe's KI 35 utility aircraft: Lt. Karl Klammer and Ass.-Arzt. Dr. Friedrich Axmacher, the Gruppe flight surgeon.

The First Gruppe was split once more from the Geschwader and moved to Laon-Samoussy, east of Soissons.

13 June

The rest of the Geschwader moved to fields near the Seine River, north of Paris: the Stab and the Second Gruppe to Morgny, and the Third Gruppe to Les Tilliers. In the morning the 9th Staffel downed a Potez 63-11 reconnaissance aircraft of GAO 3/551. Hptm. Galland took off from Capelle at 1130, combining his Gruppe's transfer flight with an orientation flight south of the Seine. He did not make contact with the enemy, but part of his 8th Staffel did, and claimed two Defiants west of Paris at 1240. These were probably Battles of No. 142 Sqd.; a flight of three was lost to Bf 109s after bombing German troops in the Vernon area. Galland made two more flights from Les Tilliers, both identified as freie Jagden. On the first a Potez 63 evaded his attack; the second was an uneventful patrol in support of the army's breakthrough.



Two French heavy tanks, one named after Marshal Ney, left in a field near Abbeville in June.
(Author's collection)



The 5th Staffel's aircraft are well camouflaged using screens and local foliage – France, June 1940.
(von Holtey via Mombeek)

14 June

The Wehrmacht continued its inexorable advance southward through France. The Geschwader's missions were principally freie Jagden, sweeps of the fluid front in search of Allied aircraft. The French Air Force was hard to find – those of its aircraft with sufficient range were flying to North Africa – but the remnants

of the RAF light bomber force still fought on. The 4th Staffel's Hptm. Ebbighausen shot down a Battle over Vernon, on the Seine. The day's major successes belonged to the Third Gruppe. Hptm. Galland led the unit on three sweeps: the first and third were unsuccessful, but the second caught several small formations of unescorted Battles and Blenheims, claiming three of the former (from Nos. 12 and 103 Sqds., which lost four for the day) and one of the latter (from No. 21 or No. 40 Sqd., which lost three). The remnants of the Battle squadrons were finally withdrawn to England on the following day. Lt. Sprick claimed a Hurricane, but was possibly shot down himself; he was uninjured, and the Geschwader suffered no more losses.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 9–14 June 1940

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
6/9/40	Oblt.	Seifert	3 CO	4	Potez 63	near Rouen			yes
6/9/40	Lt.	Bürschgens	7	2	Morane 406	Mantes	3:15 PM	GC 1/145	yes
6/9/40	Lt.	Ebeling	8	4	Morane 406	Rouen	3:30 PM	GC 1/145	yes
6/9/40	Fw.	Gärtner	8	1	Morane 406	unknown	3:35 PM	GC 1/145	yes
6/13/40	Lt.	Sprick	8	8	Battle	unknown	12:39 PM	142 Sqd	yes
6/13/40	Lt.	Ebeling	8	5	Battle	Paris	12:40 PM	142 Sqd	yes
6/13/40	Lt.	Ludewig	9	1	Potez 63	unknown	10:30 AM	GAO 3/551	yes
6/14/40	Hptm.	Ebbighausen	4 CO	5	Battle	Vernon	5:53 PM	12+103 Sqd	yes
6/14/40	Hptm.	Galland A.	III CO	13	Blenheim	22km SE Vernon/ Brevat	5:15 PM	21+40 Sqd	yes
6/14/40	Hptm.	Galland A.	III CO	14	Battle	10km S of Evreux	5:28 PM	12+103 Sqd	yes
6/14/40	Lt.	Blume	7	3	Battle	Dreux	5:40 PM	12+103 Sqd	yes
6/14/40	Fw.	Gärtner	8	2	Battle	unknown	5:50 PM	12+103 Sqd	yes
6/14/40	Lt.	Sprick	8	9	Hurricane	unknown	5:50 PM		yes

17 June

The First Gruppe moved to St. Remy, southeast of Paris; the rest of the Geschwader transferred to Villacoublay, a large permanent French airbase on the outskirts of Paris.

19 June

In the absence of aerial targets, the Geschwader's principal mission became the strafing of ground targets, either specifically targeted or tacked on after the conclusion of area patrols. The Third Gruppe silenced a flak battery at Vatan on its morning mission, and made an effective attack on infantry columns near La Chapelle in the afternoon. The Second Gruppe lost two pilots southwest of Châteauroux. Lt. Peter Blohm and Uffz. Josef Ganster were killed while strafing, but the records disagree as to the cause; they either struck power lines, or were downed by French anti-aircraft fire.

20 June

The First Gruppe moved further south, to Nevers. The Second Gruppe was awarded the honor of flying cover patrols over the armistice negotiations at Compiègne.

22 June

The armistice brought the campaign in France to an end. JG 26 began to move back to its permanent stations in Germany. The Third Gruppe left for Mönchen-Gladbach on this date; the Stab and the Second Gruppe moved to Dortmund on the 23rd.



Sixth Staffel aircraft in the field in France. Note the war photographer at work in the background. (Petrick)



Sixth Staffel groundcrewmen guard their charges while looking forward to a supper of Hasenpfeffer. Note that "brown 7" still carries the narrow prewar fuselage cross. (Petrick)

24 June

The command of the Geschwader was given to Major Gotthardt Handrick, who passed his First Gruppe to Hptm. Kurt Fischer. Major Witt became operations officer at Jafü 2 in Le Touquet, and later in the war held various staff positions in Africa, Norway, Silesia, and Italy.



The 6th Staffel's "brown 12" is transported from the site of its crash landing to the field workshops – France, June 1940. (*Van Boxem via Vanoverbeke*)

26 June

Fourteen Blenheims from the RAF's No. 1 Group made an unescorted raid on Münster. One of the British bombers was lost to flak, but another scored an unusual success against the intercepting Messerschmitts, which were from II/JG 26. Lt. Otto-Heinrich Hilleke's aircraft was hit by a Blenheim gunner, and Hilleke broke his neck attempting to bail out. Hilleke had been one of the Second Gruppe's most successful pilots in the campaign just concluded, with six victories in fifty-nine combat sorties.

The First Gruppe reached Bönninghardt from southern France on this date, but lost one pilot on the transfer flight from Lyon. Gefr. Heinz Braune lost power after take-off and was killed in the resulting crash.

1 July

The Third Gruppe transferred from Mönchen-Gladbach to Döberitz, where it was given the mission of preventing any RAF interference with the victory celebrations in Berlin. The British did not put in an appearance, but the Gruppe did not make it back to the Rhineland until the 20th, just in time to pack up for the return of the Geschwader to France.

5 July

The 5th Staffel's Oblt. von Holtey shot down a Blenheim raider over Senden.



Having seen Paris, the enthusiastic occupants of this 6th Staffel truck are looking forward to seeing England. (*Van Boxem via Vanoverbeke*)

7 July

The First Gruppe intercepted another of Bomber Command's infrequent, low-strength daylight raids on the Ruhr, and Fw. Müller of the 3rd Staffel was credited with downing a Blenheim.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 5-7 July 1940

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	CI #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
7/5/40	Oblt.	Holtey v.	5 CO	1	Blenheim	Senden	2:15 PM		yes
7/7/40	Fw.	Müller W.	3	4	Blenheim	N of Unterbach	12:50 PM		yes

JG 26 Casualties: 1-26 June 1940

Date	Rank	Name	Cas	Unit	Aircraft	WNr	Mkgs	Place	Time	Cause
6/1/40	Lt.	Gruel, Siegfried	KIA	3	Bf 109E-1			Dunkirk/Pervyse		Spitfire
6/1/40	Hptm.	Pomaska, Alfred	KIA	6 CO	Bf 109E-3			Dunkirk		Hurricane
6/1/40	Uffz.	Beese, Artur	POW (temp)	9	Bf 109E-3			Lille		Morane 406
6/1/40	Oblt.	Germeroth, Rudolf	WIA	3	Bf 109E			N of Dunkirk		Spitfire
6/1/40	Lt.	Keller, Paul	WIA	6	Bf 109E-1			Dunkirk/Calais		Hurricane
6/3/40	Fw.	Roth, Willi	POW (temp)	4	Bf 109E-3			40km N of Paris		Bloch 152
6/5/40	Uffz.	Leisse, Paul	KIA	4	Bf 109E-3		wh 9	Le Touquet/Chièvres		Hawk 75A
6/7/40	Uffz.	Iberle, Rudolf	KIA	4	Bf 109E-3	1541	wh 13	SE of Dieppe		Hurricane
6/7/40	Obfw.	Lorenz, Friedrich	KIA	5	Bf 109E-3			Bois Jean a/f/ Montreuil		Hurricane
6/7/40	Uffz.	Philipp, Wilhelm	WIA	4	Bf 109E-3			Dieppe		Hurricane

6/8/40	Lt.	Reimer, Walter	KIA	2	Bf 109E-3	SE of Amiens		Spitfire
6/8/40	Lt.	Dörr, Hermann	KIA	7	Bf 109E-3	Neufchatel	9:30 AM	Morane 406
6/8/40	Fw.	Burkhardt, Alfred	POW (temp)	3	Bf 109E-3	SW of Beauvais		Morane 406
6/8/40	Lt.	Mietusch, Klaus	POW (temp)	7	Bf 109E-1	Neufchatel	10:30 AM	Hurricane
6/8/40	Lt.	Ripke, Hermann	WIA	8	Bf 109E-1	Amiens		Hawk 75A
6/9/40	Oblt.	Seifert, Johannes	WIA	3 CO	Bf 109E	NE of Beauvais		unknown
6/11/40	Lt.	Klammer, Karl	KIFA	6	KI 35	Bois Jean a/f		wing failed
6/14/40	Lt.	Sprick, Gustav "Micky"	WIA	8	Bf 109E-1	S of Evreux		flak + French Ftr
6/18/40	Uffz.	Wolf, Heinz	WAC	3	none	Sezanne		vehicle
6/19/40	Lt.	Blohm, Peter	KIA	6	Bf 109E-3	SW Châteauroux		flak/hit lines
6/19/40	Uffz.	Ganster, Josef	KIA	6	Bf 109E-3	Châteauroux		hit lines
6/26/40	Lt.	Hilleke, Otto-Heinrich	KIA	II St	Bf 109E-1	Waltrop/SE Haltern		Blenheim
6/26/40	Gefr.	Braune, Heinz	KIFA	2	Bf 109E-1	Lyon		engine

Chapter Four

THE BATTLE OF BRITAIN I: The Struggle for Air Supremacy

July – 6 September 1940

15 July

The Geschwader Stab and the First Gruppe began moving from Germany to France for the campaign against England. They were to rejoin Jafü 2 in Genobst. Kesselring's Luftflotte 2, and would be based in a former grain field at Audembert, on the Channel coast near Calais. Some of the First Gruppe ground crews did not reach Audembert until August, and the date that the Gruppe became operational at its French base is uncertain. While in Germany the aircraft of the Geschwader were fitted with seat and back armor, but re-equipment with Messerschmitt's latest design, the Bf 109E-4, which featured an armored windshield and a very effective armament of two MG FF/M wing cannon plus two cowl-mounted light machine guns, was incomplete, and many lightly-armed Bf 109E-1s remained on strength.



Third Gruppe groundcrewmen build dispersals at Caffiers after returning to France in July. (*Price*)

21 July

The other two Gruppen joined the Geschwader on the Channel coast near Calais. The Second Gruppe was based at Marquise; the Third Gruppe at Caffiers. Both locations had been British airbases during the First World War. They had no permanent installations, but featured large, well-drained landing fields. Until revetments could be built aircraft were dispersed under trees around the fields or under netting. Maintenance was handled outdoors, operations were conducted from trailers, and the men were quartered either in tents or in nearby towns.

At this time the Luftwaffe's goal was to establish aerial superiority over the Channel. The German fighter force had been limited for several weeks to a single Geschwader, JG 51, and a few independent Jagdgruppen; JG 26 was a welcomed addition to Luftflotte 2's

strength. The Schlageter pilots were called on to fly freie Jagden, reconnaissance sorties, and various types of escort. The Geschwader received its orders and fought as individual Gruppen; the Geschwader itself was considered too large to function effectively as a combat unit. The Gruppe was a powerful and flexible combat formation, however, far superior to anything put up by the RAF at this stage of the war. The Jagdwaffe's combat formations and tactics were also superior, and it was equipped with a fighter much better than its most numerous opponent, the Hurricane, and at least equal to the RAF's most publicized fighter, the Spitfire. According to the Geschwader's surviving veterans, none of the men expected the campaign to last more than a few weeks.

24 July

The Geschwader's first mission of the Battle was to support Do 17 bombers attacking a British convoy in the Thames Estuary. The Second Gruppe was ordered to sweep ahead of the bombers, while the Third Gruppe escorted the bomber formation. The Second Gruppe's mission was a disastrous failure. The Gruppe was not fully operational, and only ten aircraft were available to take part. While approaching Dover, Hptm. Noack saw "thirty Spitfires" – actually nine, from No. 610 Sqd. – above them, aborted the mission, and turned back for France. Noack's approach to the field at Marquise was too high. He pulled up to go around, but stalled out and crashed, and was killed instantly. Oblt. Karl Ebbighausen of the 4th Staffel was named to succeed Noack.

Major Galland's Third Gruppe flew the mission at its full strength of about forty Messerschmitts. They first encountered No. 54 Squadron's Spitfires, flying



The JG 26 headquarters staff on a visit to the Third Gruppe at Caffiers. From left: Hptm. Wilde, Operations Officer; Major Gotthardt Handrick, Kommodore from 24 June to 21 August 1940; Oblt. Rothenberg, Adjutant. (*Schöpfel*)



A Messerschmitt of the Third Gruppe Stab after a forced landing, apparently following oil loss and engine stoppage. (*Meyer*)

from Rochford on the north coast of the Estuary; No. 65 Sqd. Spitfires then joined the combat from Manston. Galland's Gruppe was held in close contact until low fuel forced the pilots to break off the engagement and head for France. They had successfully defended the Dorniers, but the Spitfires had prevented any damage to the convoy. Claims and losses were likewise even; the Gruppe shot down two 54 Sqd. Spitfires, but lost two pilots. Lt. Josef Schauf was killed when his parachute failed to open. Oblt. Werner Bartels, the Third Gruppe technical officer, was shot down by a No. 65 Sqd. Spitfire over Margate and belly landed near the coast, seriously wounded. Bartels was a thirty-eight-year-old former test pilot and a well-known engineer; he was repatriated in 1943 in a prisoner exchange program little publicized then or since, and became an engineer on the Me 262 project. The two losses came as a shock to the Third Gruppe. Galland has stated that this first combat over England reinforced his belief that the Royal Air Force Fighter Command would prove a most formidable opponent.

25 July

The Luftwaffe's major effort comprised a series of attacks by Ju 87 dive bombers on a Channel convoy. The Third Gruppe was assigned the task of close escort to the first of three waves of Stukas. The Second Gruppe apparently flew top cover on an early sweep, but failed to make contact with the defending fighters; one persistent problem with Jagdwaffe tactics at this time was that top cover missions were flown at too high an altitude. The Ju 87s found the convoy unprotected by fighters, and made a successful attack. The first defenders to arrive, five No. 54 Sqd. Spitfires, were fended off by Galland's Stabsschwarm, which shot down one British aircraft. No. 64 Squadron and the rest of No. 54 Squadron reached the area in time to attack the Ju 87s as they pulled up from their dives, but the Spitfires were surprised by Oblt. Georg Beyer's 7/JG 26, which had succeeded in keeping formation with the Stukas. The 7th Staffel claimed four Spitfires, without loss to themselves; the two Spitfire squadrons lost four pilots, and No. 54 had to be withdrawn for rebuilding.

For the rest of the afternoon the Geschwader sent small patrols over the Channel in support of the Stukas' continuing attacks. On one of these patrols the 9th Staffel's Fw. Bernhard Eberz was shot down by Hurricanes and killed, the Geschwader's only loss for the day. By the next morning the convoy had lost half its ships to aircraft or torpedo boat attacks.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 24-25 July 1940

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
7/24/40	Hptm.	Galland A.	III CO	15	Spitfire	30km N of Margate	1:30 PM	54 Sqd	unk
7/24/40	Fw.	Straub	7	1	Spitfire	N of Margate	1:30 PM	54 Sqd	unk
7/25/40	Hptm.	Galland A.	III CO	16	Spitfire	Dover Harbor	4:17 PM	54 Sqd	yes
7/25/40	Oblt.	Beyer	7 CO	4	Spitfire	S of Dover		54+64 Sqd	unk
7/25/40	Lt.	Bürschgens	7	3	Spitfire	Dover		54+64 Sqd	unk
7/25/40	Lt.	Müller-Dühe	7	3	Spitfire	Dover		54+64 Sqd	unk
7/25/40	Lt.	Blume	7	4	Spitfire	Dover	4:35 PM	54+64 Sqd	yes

JG 26 Casualties: 24-25 July 1940

Date	Rank	Name	Cas	Unit	Aircraft	WNr	Mkgs	Place	Time	Cause
7/24/40	Lt.	Schauff, Josef	KIA	8	Bf 109E-4			NW of Margate	2:05 PM	Spitfire
7/24/40	Hptm.	Noack, Erich	KIA	II CO	Bf 109E-1			Dover/ Marquise-Ost	1:00 PM	Spitfire
7/24/40	Oblt.	Bartels, Werner	POW	III St	Bf 109E-1	6296	<1	Margate	2:00 PM	Spitfire
7/25/40	Fw.	Eberz, Bernhard	KIA	9	Bf 109E-1			S of Dover	5:30 PM	Hurricane

28 July

The day's bombing raid brought a remarkable change in German tactics – whether by accident or design is unclear. No. 74 Squadron's Spitfires and No. 257 Squadron's Hurricanes were scrambled from Manston and Hawkinge at 1450 to intercept a large raid heading for Dover. Upon the approach of the British fighters, the bomber formation wheeled around and headed for France, leaving the fighters to the attention of the strong escort, the First and Second Gruppen of JG 51. No. 41 Squadron was then ordered up from Manston, only to be hit by Major Galland, up sun with III/JG 26. The confused combats cost No. 74 Squadron two fighters destroyed and two damaged; No. 41 Squadron lost one damaged. The Spitfire pilots claimed four Messerschmitts destroyed, one probably destroyed, and three damaged (customarily abbreviated 4-1-3 claims). Galland's Gruppe suffered no casualties. JG 51 lost two aircraft destroyed and one damaged; one of its pilots was killed, and one, Maj. Mölders, was shot in the legs. German claims totalled five Spitfires, exactly matching the total number lost and damaged. The Third Gruppe's share was two; Galland got one, and a 9th Staffel pilot claimed the other. In addition, Galland's wingman, Oblt. Müncheberg, caught a stray Hurricane of No. 257 Squadron, and damaged it so badly that it was written off after its forced landing. Müncheberg was credited with its destruction.

29 July

JG 51 and the Third Gruppe collaborated on an early-morning escort mission during which Ju 87s pummelled shipping targets in Dover harbor, almost free of harassment by the RAF. The Third Gruppe found no British fighters. The British Admiralty decided to prohibit the daylight passage of merchant ships

through the Straits of Dover. On the 28th the Royal Navy had withdrawn its Dover destroyer flotilla from the Channel; the Luftwaffe can fairly be said to have won this phase of the Battle.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 28–29 July 1940

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
7/28/40	Hptm.	Galland A.	III CO	17	Spitfire	10km NNE of Dover	3:20 PM	74 Sqd	unk
7/28/40	Oblt.	Müncheberg	III St	10	Hurricane	15km NE of Dover	3:15 PM	257 Sqd	yes
7/28/40	Fw.	Carl	9	1	Spitfire	NE of Dover	3:25 PM	74 Sqd	yes
7/29/40		II. Flak Unit	II	1	Battle	Marquise	4:10 AM		unk



Hptm. Adolf Galland is pictured here in his leather flying jacket, soon after receiving the Knight's Cross on 1 August. (*Bürschgens*)

1 August

Poor weather limited flying for several days. Newly-promoted Generalfeldmarschall Albert Kesselring visited Caffiers and presented the Knight's Cross to Maj. Galland. Galland, who had seventeen aerial victories and numerous ground attacks (in Spain and Poland) to his credit, was the first Schlagerpilot pilot so honored.

Major Werner Mölders was named Kommodore of JG 51, the first of the younger generation of fighter leaders to be given such a command. This was probably no reflection on the performance of his predecessor, Obst. Theo Osterkamp, who was promoted to Generalmajor and named Jagdfliegerführer (Jafü), or fighter leader, of the all-important Luftflotte 2.

JG 26 now stood down for a week while the Luftwaffe continued to build up its strength in northern France. Plans for Adlertag (Eagle Day), which would initiate the decisive battle against the RAF, were completed. Massive attacks were to be made on the infrastructure of Fighter Command in southeastern England – its airplanes, airfields, and ground organization – which would draw the whole of the British aerial defense forces to the area, and lead to their destruction.

8 August

This day's fighting was a continuation of the July pattern of sweeps and shipping attacks, and was thus not directly associated with Adlertag. It was, however, unprecedented in its scale and severity. At noon the Third Gruppe, along with II/JG 51 and III/JG 51, swept the Dover area in advance of an attack by Luftflotte 3's Stukas on a convoy that had cleared the Straits of Dover the preceding night. The Germans succeeded in drawing up three squadrons of Spitfires, Nos. 41, 64, and 65. The British claimed the destruction of nine Bf

109s in the ensuing combat, for the loss of three Spitfires. The Germans in turn claimed eight RAF fighters. Three of these claims were by the Third Gruppe, which suffered the only German casualty, Oblt. Willi Oehm, a former instructor who was killed on his first combat flight. In the middle of the battle a No. 600 Sqd. Blenheim attempted to take off from Manston on a practice mission; it was spotted by Oblt. Schöpfel, who shot it down. While under escort by Luftflotte 3's own fighters the Stukas were intercepted near the Isle of Wight and suffered serious losses, but only four of the convoy's twenty ships made port undamaged.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 8 August 1940

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
8/8/40	Oblt.	Müncheberg	III St	11	Spitfire	NE of Margate	12:55 PM	65 Sqd	unk
8/8/40	Fw.	Grzymalla	8	4	Hurricane	NE of Margate/ Canterbury	12:40 PM		yes
8/8/40	Oblt.	Schöpfel	9 CO	6	Spitfire	W of Canterbury	12:34 PM	65 Sqd	yes
8/8/40	Oblt.	Schöpfel	9 CO	5	Blenheim	S of Ramsgate	12:35 PM	600 Sqd	yes



Lt. Bürschgens bent his Bf 109E-1 "white 7" (W.Nr. 4495) while force-landing on Caffiers after combat over England on 11 August. The weakest point of the Messerschmitt fighter's fuselage was right behind the cockpit. (*Wermann*)

11 August

A series of sweeps across Kent by Luftflotte 2's fighters succeeded in drawing a number of No. 11 Group squadrons into combat, while Luftflotte 3's Bf 110s and Bf 109s provoked a similar reaction from No. 10 Group over Portland. The two sides' fighter losses for the day were nearly equal: twenty-six British for twenty-five German. Neither the First nor the Second Gruppe filed any claims or suffered any losses on these sweeps, and the extent of their participation is unknown. The Third Gruppe flew one unsuccessful sweep, which netted only a few of Dover's barrage balloons, and sustained the loss of one aircraft – the Bf 109E-1 of the 7th Staffel's Lt. Bürschgens. Over Manston his aircraft took several hits in its fuselage and engine from a No. 74 Squadron Spitfire.

Bürschgens made it back across the Channel, but was forced to belly-land in a field near his base at Caffiers; its back broken, the Messerschmitt was written off.

12 August

The day dawned clear and stayed fair, giving the Luftwaffe an opportunity to soften up targets in southern England in advance of Adlertag, now scheduled for the 13th. No. 11 Group did not respond to the Third Gruppe's early-morning freie Jagd. In mid-morning Erprobungsgruppe 210's Bf 110s bombed the coastal radar stations at Dover and Rye, and KG 2 and KG 3 attacked the airfields at Hawkinge and Lympne. Hptm. Kurt Fischer's First Gruppe provided the close escort to the Lympne raiders, and saw its first real combat of the Battle. No. 610 Sqd. caught up to the formation on its withdrawal, and were engaged in combat by the Gruppe, which claimed at least two Spitfires for the loss of Oblt. Friedrich Butterweck, killed when his fighter exploded over Ashford.

Kesselring now ordered his Ju 87s to attack two small convoys in the Thames Estuary. Fifteen Hurricanes from Nos. 501 and 151 Squadrons were able to get to the Stukas before they were, in turn, struck by the Third Gruppe, which was sweeping the area at the time. The Stukas jettisoned their bombs and scattered before the attack. The dogfight which followed cost the British five Hurricanes and two pilots, without loss to the Third Gruppe, which claimed the five RAF fighters.

That afternoon Manston underwent the first major attack of what was to become a weeks-long ordeal. Eighteen Do 17s made a single pass at medium altitude, dropping a dense pattern of high-explosive and fragmentation bombs. The airfield erupted in a cloud of chalk dust and smoke rising to several thousand feet. Several Spitfires were able to take off during the attack, but were unable to catch the rapidly-withdrawing Dorniers. At least three airborne squadrons were vectored to intercept the Gruppe on withdrawal. The Dorniers downed two Hurricanes of No. 56 Squadron before returning to Arras unscathed. The bomber's close escort, I/JG 26, dove on No. 64 Squadron's Spitfires, which were well below the bombers when they reached the area. One section of Spitfires attacked the rear of Fischer's Gruppe as he led the unit down to attack the larger formation. No. 64 Sqd. lost one Spitfire, whose pilot bailed out, wounded, while a second force-landed. One Messerschmitt went down, piloted by Lt. Hans-Werner Regenauer, who states that this was the first mission on which he had seen a British aircraft. Regenauer was rescued by a British ship after seven hours in the Channel.

The day also saw Hptm. Ebbighausen's Second Gruppe file its first victory claim of the Battle. Lt. Krug of the 4th Staffel claimed a Spitfire over Margate at 1225, at the same time as the First Gruppe's Uffz. Haferkorn was credited with shooting down a Morane MS 406. There were no French fighters in the area, but Haferkorn's target may have been a Blackburn Skua dive bomber. While engaged in an impromptu air search mission, S/L D. H. "Nobby" Clarke was attacked by a lone Bf 109 at 3,000 feet; Clarke half-rolled, dropped his flaps, and entered a vertical dive. The German pilot overshot, barely avoiding the Channel. Clarke pulled out at 300 feet and returned to Gosport, unscathed.

In mid-afternoon the Third Gruppe flew its third freie Jagd of the day, a sweep of Dover. Major Galland failed to contact the enemy, and so failed to



Major Galland in a Bf 109E with an unusual combination of markings – both a Gruppenkommandeur's chevrons and the 9th Staffel's "Hellhound". This airplane may have been W.Nr. 4820, which he flew only on 12 and 14 August. (*Martin*)

get credit for the mission, but part of the Gruppe apparently engaged the RAF fighters that were battling the Manston raiders, and claimed three Spitfires.

Of the Geschwader's combat units, only the Stab remained scoreless. Although current Jagdwaffe doctrine did not call for the Geschwader Kommando to lead his men in combat, Major Handrick did fly several missions, but failed to contact the enemy. According to Walter Horten, the Geschwader technical officer, the Stab flight comprised only a Rotte of two aircraft rather than a full Schwarm of four, and was at a disadvantage owing to the Kommando's peculiar ideas on tactics – for example, Handrick believed that he could best control his Gruppen by trailing, rather than leading, them.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 12 August 1940

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
8/12/40	Oblt.	Dähne	1	1	Spitfire	NE of Goodwin			unk
8/12/40	Ogfr.	Jäckel E.	2	1	Spitfire	near Margate			unk
8/12/40	Oblt.	Regenauer	2		Spitfire	Channel-Folkestone	12:20 PM	64 Sqd	no
8/12/40	Uffz.	Haferkorn	2	1	Morane 406	Channel Narrows	12:25 PM		yes
8/12/40	Uffz.	Högel	3	1	Spitfire	S of Folkestone	9:20 AM	610 Sqd	yes
8/12/40	Lt.	Ruppert K.	3	2	Spitfire	S of Folkestone	9:15 AM	610 Sqd	yes
8/12/40	Lt.	Krug	4	5	Spitfire	Margate	12:25 PM		yes
8/12/40	Hptm.	Galland A.	III CO	18	Hurricane	NNW of Margate	12:41 PM	501 Sqd	unk
8/12/40	Lt.	Ebeling	8	6	Hurricane	Thames Estuary	12:15 PM	151+501 Sqd	yes
8/12/40	Lt.	Ebeling	8	7	Hurricane	Thames Estuary	12:20 PM	151+501 Sqd	yes
8/12/40	Oblt.	Sprick	8 CO	10	Hurricane	NW of Margate	12:20 PM	151+501 Sqd	yes
8/12/40	Lt.	Ebeling	8	8	Spitfire	SW of Dover	6:20 PM	64 Sqd	yes
8/12/40	Fw.	Grzymalla	8	5	Spitfire	SW of Dover	6:30 PM	64 Sqd	yes
8/12/40	Oblt.	Schöpfel	9 CO	7	Spitfire	Folkestone	12:30 PM	151+501 Sqd	unk
8/12/40	Lt.	Naumann	9		Spitfire	Folkestone	6:20 PM	64 Sqd	no

JG 26 Casualties: 8–12 August 1940

Date	Rank	Name	Cas	Unit	Aircraft	WNR	Mkgs	Place	Time	Cause
8/8/40	Oblt.	Oehm, Willy	KIA	8	Bf 109E-4			E of Margate	1:15 PM	Spitfire
8/11/40	Lt.	Bürschgens, Josef	no	7	Bf 109E-1	4095	wh 7	Calais-Caffiers	11:30 AM	Spitfire
8/12/40	Oblt.	Butterweck, Friedrich	KIA	1	Bf 109E-1			Elham/SE of Ashford	9:30 AM	Spitfire
8/12/40	Oblt.	Regenauer, H-Werner	POW	2	Bf 109E-4			Folkestone	12:20 PM	Spitfire



A 9th Staffel Bf 109E is prepared for salvage after crash-landing in France. Note the mechanic's wrenches on the wing. (*Molge*)



The airfield command post and part of the aircraft dispersal area at Caffiers, on a side of the field bereft of trees. (*Price*)

13 August

This was the long-anticipated Adlertag, which initiated the heaviest week of fighting in the Battle. The Third Gruppe took off from Caffiers at the unusual time of 0632 and flew an uneventful sweep ahead of KG 2's attack on Eastchurch airfield. Further raids were postponed until the arrival of somewhat better weather in the afternoon. The most successful of these raids was an attack by forty Ju 87s which pulverized Detling, a Coastal Command airfield. The Stukas were permitted to bomb untouched by British fighters, which had been drawn away by JG 26's freie Jagd, flown for the first time in full three-Gruppe strength. A dense cloud bank spread out to the west at 6,000 feet and shielded the formation in that direction. The Second Gruppe, which led the armada at 25,000 feet, was the only JG 26 unit to make contact with the defenders, claiming two No. 56 Sqd. Hurricanes over Maidstone while losing one Bf 109E-1 east of that town; its pilot, Uffz. Hans Wemhöner, was taken prisoner. According to anecdotal evidence a dozen Second Gruppe Messerschmitts failed to reach Marquise, instead force-landing on or near the French coast; their pilots had lost their orientation in the solid cloud deck and had flown until they ran out of fuel.

14 August

Luftwaffe activity was much reduced from Adlertag. JG 26's role was a reprise of that of the previous day – all three Gruppen escorted a large formation of Ju 87s in a planned attack on a British airbase, probably Hawkinge. Apparently both the First and Third Gruppen flew close escort, while the Second Gruppe flew either as detached escort (a new concept) or in a supporting freie Jagd. No. 11 Group had ample warning of the raid's approach and met it over Dover with forty-two fighters. The resulting mêlée involved nearly two hundred fighters, and lasted a full hour. The First Gruppe stayed with the Stukas, claimed two Spitfires, and lost one pilot. The Second Gruppe also claimed two Spitfires, while the Third Gruppe claimed four Spitfires and three Hurricanes. All but one of the Geschwader's victories were gained in the Folkestone-Dover area between 1330 and 1400 hours. The RAF fighters were from: No. 32 Sqd., which lost one Hurricane destroyed and two force-landed but repairable; No. 65 Sqd., two of whose Spitfires force-landed; No. 610 Sqd., which also had two Spitfires force-land; and No. 615 Sqd., which lost two Hurricanes with their pilots, and had another two suffer damage. The eleven JG 26 claims thus correspond to nine downed RAF fighters, excellent agreement for this stage of the war, but six of the British aircraft and seven of the pilots ultimately returned to duty. Many crashing Hurricanes and Spitfires, duly credited as Jagdwaffe victories, were lost only temporarily from Fighter Command's order of battle. "Repairable" may have been an optimistic RAF euphemism for aircraft that were, in fact, scrapped, but it is undeniable that the pilots of many "crashed" RAF aircraft were back in combat very shortly, resulting in serious miscalculations by the Luftwaffe High Command and leading rapidly to Reichsmarschall Göring's loss of confidence in his fighter pilots.

The lone Geschwader casualty in this battle was Feldwebel Gerhard Kemen, who had joined the 1st Staffel after completing his flight training in June. He was badly injured by a No. 32 Sqd. Hurricane and lost consciousness after bailing out, coming to in a Dover hospital. Kemen was transported to a Canadian POW camp in 1941, was repatriated with several other wounded JG

26 pilots in 1943, and returned to active duty in time for the final battles for the Reich – this time on a ground staff.

JG 26's escort tactics were successful; only one Ju 87 was lost, and apparently few RAF fighters even got near the vulnerable dive bombers, which were, however, kept from their assigned target. Results of the attack, the vortex of the whirlwind of activity reported above, were negligible: the Dover lightship was sunk, and one Staffel of Bf 109s found the time to shoot down eight barrage balloons. The raid did serve as a massive diversion, under cover of which the Bf 110s of EprGr 210 pummelled Manston once again.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 13-14 August 1940

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
8/13/40	Lt.	Borris	5	3	Hurricane	Maidstone-Detling	5:05 PM	56 Sqd	yes
8/13/40	Lt.	Borris	5	4	Hurricane	Maidstone-Detling	5:07 PM	56 Sqd	unk
8/14/40	Oblt.	Hörnig	1 CO	1	Spitfire	Dover	1:20 PM	65+610 Sqd	yes
8/14/40	Fw.	Müller W.	3	5	Spitfire	S of Dover	1:30 PM	65+610 Sqd	unk
8/14/40	Hptm.	Ebbighausen	II CO	6	Spitfire	Folkestone	1:35 PM	65+610 Sqd	unk
8/14/40	Lt.	Krug	4 CO	6	Spitfire	Dover	1:29 PM	32+615 Sqd	yes
8/14/40	Oblt.	Müncheberg	III St	12	Hurricane	Folkestone-Dover	1:35 PM	65+610 Sqd	unk
8/14/40	Hptm.	Galland A.	III CO	19	Hurricane	SW of Dover	1:30 PM	32+615 Sqd	yes
8/14/40	Oblt.	Beyer	7 CO	5	Spitfire	Dover	1:35 PM	65+610 Sqd	unk
8/14/40	Lt.	Müller-Dühe	7	5	Spitfire	Dover	1:35 PM	65+610 Sqd	unk
8/14/40	Lt.	Bürschgens	7	4	Spitfire	Dover	1:40 PM	65+610 Sqd	yes
8/14/40	Fw.	Carl	9	2	Spitfire	unknown	12:30 PM	65+610 Sqd	unk
8/14/40	Oblt.	Schöpfel	9 CO	8	Hurricane	Folkestone-Dover	1:30 PM	32+615 Sqd	unk

JG 26 Casualties: 13-14 August 1940

Date	Rank	Name	Cas	Unit	Aircraft	W Nr	Mkgs	Place	Time	Cause
8/13/40	Uffz.	Wemhöner, Hans	POW	5	Bf 109E-1			Folkestone/ E Maidstone	5:15 PM	Spitfire
8/14/40	Uffz.	Kemen, Gerhard	POW	1	Bf 109E-1	4827	wh 8	Coldred/ W Dover	1:45 PM	Hurricane

15 August

As soon as the morning clouds cleared from England, the three Luftflotten in northern France and southern Norway were called to readiness for a maximum effort. Luftflotte 2 mounted three major raids in the afternoon; JG 26 was to play a prominent role in all three. The first formation was detected over Calais by No. 11 Group's radars shortly after 1200. It consisted of sixty Ju 87s escorted by, among other units, JG 26's Second and Third Gruppen. Their targets were the satellite airfields at Hawkinge and Lympne. Two airborne squadrons were vectored to intercept. No. 501 Squadron's Hurricanes reached the Hawkinge attack force just as the Junkers echeloned to dive. The Hurricane pilots succeeded in downing two bombers before they were in turn struck from above by II/JG 51, which shot down three fighters. No. 54 Sqd. had no luck in penetrating JG 26's screen to get to the Lympne attackers, and lost two Spitfires. JG 26 claimed at least seven, an unusual degree of overclaiming for the Geschwader, but in line with the performance of the Luftwaffe as a whole, which claimed the destruction of 111 RAF fighters this day versus a true British loss of thirty-five.

Two JG 26 Gruppen were ordered to fly freie Jagden in support of Luftflotte 2's second major raid of the day, and swept in over Kent in advance of eighty-eight Do 17s of KG 3, which had a close escort of more than 130 Bf 109s from

JG 51, JG 52, and JG 54. The bombers' targets were the Rochester and Eastchurch airfields, both of which were hard hit. Seven No. 11 Group squadrons attempted to engage the bombers, but were fended off by the massive escort, losing six fighters, while eight more Hurricanes and Spitfires crash-landed with repairable damage. JG 26's Second and Third Gruppen filed at least eight claims for RAF fighters. One was exceptionally well documented. After re-crossing the Channel, a 7th Staffel Schwarm caught a No. 64 Sqd. Spitfire near the airfield at Calais-Marck and shot it down. Its British pilot was interviewed by the victorious pilots and claimed to have believed he was over England. The crash scene was visited by Luftwaffe brass from nearby Wissant and was recorded by a service photographer.



The Spitfire of P/O Ralph Roberts of No. 54 Squadron rests in a beet field near Calais on 15 August. It had just been shot down by the 7th Staffel's Lt. Gerhard Müller-Dühe, who was killed over England three days later. (*Terbeck*)

Kesselring's third major raid came in late afternoon. All three Geschwader Gruppen took part, but only the mission of Galland's Third Gruppe is known – it was given another desirable supporting *freie Jagd*. The Do 17s were briefed to bomb the important Fighter Command base of Biggin Hill, but instead hit West Mallang, a non-operational field, without hindrance from RAF fighters, which were driven off by the Messerschmitts and lost three Hurricanes and two Spitfires, in exact agreement with JG 26 claims.

The Luftwaffe's effort peaked this day. Never again in the Battle would it fly as many sorties – more than 2,000 – or suffer heavier losses. The British claimed 180 victories, against a true German loss of seventy-six. Sperrle's Luftflotte 3 and Stumpff's Luftflotte 5 were punished severely, and Stumpff's bombers were withdrawn from the daylight battle. Luftflotte 2's fighters were directed with great skill, however, and Kesselring's forces suffered few losses. For its part JG 26 claimed a total of twenty-two victories, without loss.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 15 August 1940

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
8/15/40	Oblt.	Henrici	I	2	Spitfire	NW of Calais	6:05 PM		yes
8/15/40	Hptm.	Ebbighausen	II CO	7	Spitfire	Dover	1:00 PM	54 Sqd	unk
8/15/40	Lt.	Krug	4 CO	7	Spitfire	Folkestone	4:05 PM	64 Sqd	yes
8/15/40	Oblt.	Ebersberger	4	1	Spitfire	Tonbridge	7:40 PM	54+266 Sqd	yes
8/15/40	Hptm.	Galland A.	III CO	20	Spitfire	10km E Dover-Folkestone	12:55 PM	54 Sqd	yes
8/15/40	Hptm.	Galland A.	III CO	21	Spitfire	15km SE of Folkestone	4:00 PM	64 Sqd	yes
8/15/40	Oblt.	Müncheberg	III St	13	Spitfire	SE of Dover (mid-Channel)	4:01 PM	64 Sqd	yes
8/15/40	Hptm.	Galland A.	III CO	22	Spitfire	20km SE of Dover	4:07 PM	64 Sqd	yes
8/15/40	Oblt.	Westphal	III St	2	Spitfire	SE of Dover			unk
8/15/40	Oblt.	Beyer	7 CO	6	Spitfire	E of Dover	12:30 PM	54 Sqd	unk
8/15/40	Lt.	Bürschgens	7	5	Spitfire	E of Dover	12:30 PM	54 Sqd	unk
8/15/40	Lt.	Müller-Dühe	7	6	Spitfire	Calais-Marck	3:50 PM	64 Sqd	yes
8/15/40	Lt.	Blume	7	5	Spitfire	E of Dover	3:55 PM	64 Sqd	yes
8/15/40	Lt.	Bürschgens	7	6	Spitfire	E of Dover	3:55 PM	64 Sqd	yes
8/15/40	Oblt.	Beyer	7 CO	7	Spitfire	Folkestone	7:45 PM	54+266 Sqd	unk
8/15/40	Lt.	Ebeling	8	9	Spitfire	Folkestone	12:40 PM	54 Sqd	unk
8/15/40	Fw.	Gärtner	8	3	Spitfire	SE of Dover	12:40 PM	54 Sqd	unk
8/15/40	Oblt.	Sprick	8 CO	11	Spitfire	Dover/NW of Boulogne	12:58 PM	54 Sqd	yes
8/15/40	Lt.	Ebeling	8	10	Hurricane	Folkestone	7:45 PM	151 Sqd	unk
8/15/40	Uffz.	Humburg	9	1	Spitfire	E of Dover	4:15 PM	64 Sqd	yes
8/15/40	Oblt.	Fronhöfer	9	3	Hurricane	Folkestone	8:20 PM	151 Sqd	yes
8/15/40	Lt.	Haiböck	9	4	Hurricane	W of Folkestone	8:25 PM	151 Sqd	yes



8th Staffel Bf 109Es dispersed on the well-shaded side of Caffiers – Summer 1940. (G. Schmidt)

16 August

Action over southern England and the Channel continued at a furious pace. The First Gruppe flew a successful freie Jagd, claiming a Hurricane and a Spitfire without loss. Hptm. Karl Ebbighausen led his Second Gruppe up from Marquise at 1300 to escort a bomber attack on the Kent airfields. As the Gruppe crossed the English coast on its return flight, Ebbighausen's Stabsschwarm was struck from above by the Spitfires of No. 266 Squadron. A Third Gruppe freie Jagd was diverted while airborne, but failed to locate this battle. The unequal combat continued until the Germans were reinforced by an unidentified Messerschmitt formation. The British unit was then virtually destroyed, losing six Spitfires and

three pilots, including its CO. The Second Gruppe Stab claimed two Spitfires, but lost its commander. Karl Ebbighausen's disappearance was not noticed during the fierce action, and his body was never recovered. He was the third Second Gruppe Kommandeur to be killed in three months, and was replaced by Hptm. Erich Bode, who had previously succeeded Ebbighausen as Kapitän of the 4th Staffel. The Third Gruppe flew another freie Jagd in the evening, but did not succeed in drawing any RAF fighters up; Galland reported no contact.

17 August

The Luftwaffe stood down. Major Galland was summoned to a conference at Karinhall, Göring's estate outside Berlin.

18 August

Kesselring's Luftflotte 2 returned to its current objective, the destruction of No. 11 Group's airfields. KG 1 was assigned Biggin Hill, while KG 76 drew Kenley. Participating in the escort were Gruppen from each of Luftflotte 2's Bf 109 and Bf 110 units: JG 3, JG 26, JG 51, JG 52, JG 54, and ZG 26. Shortly after noon, Dover radar reported the heaviest enemy build-up yet seen. JG 26's contribution to this raid was the Third Gruppe. Today in Galland's absence it was commanded by the 9th Staffel Kapitän, Oblt. Gerhard Schöpfel. III/JG 26 and one Gruppe from JG 3 drew the choice freie Jagd assignment, sweeping across Dover twenty-five miles ahead of the bombers. As he crossed the English coast, Schöpfel spotted a formation of Hurricanes far below him, circling in the Canterbury area while straining for altitude. He ordered his Gruppe to remain up sun and, as soon as the Hurricanes turned away, dove alone to the attack. He pulled up in the blind spot of the rear Hurricane, which was weaving as demanded by Fighter Command's current doctrine, and shot it down. His presence still unnoticed, he attacked the next three aircraft in formation and shot them down also; he only broke off the attack when his canopy was fouled by the oil of his last victim.

Schöpfel destroyed four of No. 501 Squadron's dozen Hurricanes in the two-minute attack, killing one pilot and wounding the other three. His feat was at the time unprecedented, and proved to be the defining event of his career, marking him for greater responsibilities. His Gruppe proceeded with its sweep, headed off No. 17 Squadron's approach to the returning bombers, and claimed three Hurricanes; one was, in fact, lost, and two crash-landed with repairable damage.

Luftflotte 2's afternoon targets were two more No. 11 Group airfields. KG 2 was to attack Hornchurch; KG 53, North Weald. The fighter force given the freie Jagd assignment was relatively large, Bf 109s being drawn from all five Luftflotte 2 Jagdgeschwader. The close escort comprised only two Gruppen – twenty-five JG 51 Bf 109s with KG 2, and twenty ZG 26 Bf 110s with KG 53. No. 11 Group's controllers juggled the positions of nine intercepting squadrons. Several bombers were hit, and the Third Gruppe took position to better protect the Dorniers of KG 2. As the Hurricanes of No. 32 Sqd. attempted to get at the bombers, the 109s came streaming down. The Hurricanes broke formation and turned to get on the tails of the diving fighters. Lt. Gerhard Müller-Dühe's Messerschmitt was hit by a short burst of machine gun fire, and erupted in flames. Its dive steepened, and plane and pilot crashed in a field. Oblt. Walter Blume crashed near Canterbury, severely wounded. Blume was repatriated in 1943 and returned to combat, ending the war with fourteen victories.

The Third Gruppe claimed no victories after this engagement, but the Dorniers that were the subject of No. 32 Squadron's attention flew on, unscathed. A few minutes later, an approaching front blanketed the targeted airfields with clouds. The bomber Geschwader, under orders to bomb only positively identified military targets, wheeled about without bombing. Once again JG 26 had accomplished its mission. The same could not be said for all of the German fighter units, however; the Luftwaffe suffered sixty-seven losses, including twenty Ju 87s from Luftflotte 3. Two results of the day's actions were the temporary withdrawal of the dive bombers from the battle over England, and an order requiring much larger, and much closer, fighter escorts for the bomber formations.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 16–18 August 1940

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
8/16/40	Lt.	Hafer	I St	1	Spitfire	S of Gravesend	1:25 PM		yes
8/16/40	Fw.	Müller W.	3	6	Hurricane	N of Tonbridge	1:15 PM		yes
8/16/40	Lt.	Roch	II St	5	Spitfire	Dover	1:55 PM	266 Sqd	yes
8/16/40	Fw.	Philipp	4	5	Spitfire	Dover	2:06 PM	266 Sqd	unk
8/16/40	Lt.	Blume	7	6	Spitfire	W Calais			unk
8/18/40	Lt.	Bürschgens	7	7	Hurricane	Canterbury	2:05 PM	17 Sqd	yes
8/18/40	Lt.	Bürschgens	7	8	Hurricane	Canterbury	2:10 PM	17 Sqd	unk
8/18/40	Oblt.	Sprick	8 CO	12	Hurricane	Canterbury	1:50 PM	17 Sqd	yes
8/18/40	Lt.	Ripke	8	2	Hurricane	unknown	4:35 PM		yes
8/18/40	Oblt.	Ebeling	8	11	Spitfire	N London	6:45 PM		yes
8/18/40	Fw.	Jäckel K.	8	2	Spitfire	N London	6:50 PM		yes
8/18/40	Oblt.	Schöpfel	9 CO	9	Hurricane	Canterbury	1:55 PM	501 Sqd	yes
8/18/40	Oblt.	Schöpfel	9 CO	10	Hurricane	Canterbury	1:55 PM	501 Sqd	yes
8/18/40	Oblt.	Schöpfel	9 CO	11	Hurricane	Canterbury	1:56 PM	501 Sqd	yes
8/18/40	Oblt.	Schöpfel	9 CO	12	Hurricane	Canterbury	1:56 PM	501 Sqd	yes

JG 26 Casualties: 16–18 August 1940

Date	Rank	Name	Cas	Unit	Aircraft	WNR	Mkgs	Place	Time	Cause
8/16/40	Hptm.	Ebbighausen, Karl	KIA	II CO	Bf 109E-4			10km SE Dover	2:00 PM	Spitfire
8/18/40	Lt.	Müller-Dühe, Gerhard	KIA	7	Bf 109E-1			Canterbury	6:30 PM	Hurricane
8/18/40	Lt.	Blume, Walter	POW	7	Bf 109E-4		wh 13	Canterbury	6:30 PM	Hurricane

22 August

Heavy clouds and rain reduced aerial activities for several days. Göring took the opportunity to make some changes in his fighter forces. The three Jagdgeschwader of Luftflotte 3, JG 2, JG 27, and JG 53, were reassigned to Luftflotte 2 and were ordered to move from Cherbourg to Calais, near the decisive target area. After stating his belief that the failure of his fighters to defeat Fighter Command was due to lack of aggressiveness, Göring began promoting his most successful young Gruppenkommandeure to Geschwader commands. Major Galland returned from Berlin as JG 26 Kommodore; by the end of October all eight fighter Kommodoren had been replaced by younger men.

Major Handrick left to take command of the Luftwaffe mission in Romania. An ambitious, well-bred officer, Handrick was disliked by Göring, but was well-connected politically. Gotthardt Handrick later served in a number of senior staff and command positions, and finished the war as an Oberst in command of the 8th Jagddivision.

In contrast to his predecessor, Galland was energetic, decisive, and innova-

tive. He began implementing his ideas as soon as he arrived at Audembert. He was in full agreement with Göring's contention that the sole measure of a fighter leader's ability was the success of his unit in combat. He immediately began weeding out those officers who did not come up to his standards. Hptm. Kurt Fisher was the first to go; he was replaced as Kommandeur of the First Gruppe by Hptm. Rolf Pingel, a successful leader from JG 53 and, like Galland, a "Spaniard". In the Second Gruppe Oblt. Wolfgang Kosse took over the 5th Staffel from Oblt. Hubertus Freiherr von Holtey, who was ordered to form an advanced training squadron (Ergänzungsstaffel) for the Geschwader. Hptm. Schöpfel was named to command the Third Gruppe, and was succeeded as 9th Staffel Kapitän by Oblt. Heinz Ebeling. The gifted twenty-one-year-old Oblt. Joachim Müncheberg, Galland's adjutant in the Third Gruppe, was given command of the 7th Staffel; Oblt. Georg Beyer, an older pilot with a good record, left the 7th to become Galland's adjutant at Geschwader headquarters. Two weeks later the Kapitän of the 1st Staffel was sacked, and was replaced by Oblt. Eberhard Henrici.

Galland was also quick to implement his ideas on escort formations and tactics. He summarized his thoughts on the topic in an interview:

"From then on, I led every Geschwader strength operation and mission. I knew exactly what was needed and what was possible in the big air battles. As my next step I established, documented, and carried out rules for a Geschwader system of bomber escort which was well-known and well-liked as the best one possible. JG 26 was known as the most reliable Geschwader for fighter escort, which was one of the most difficult tasks for a Jagdgeschwader. It needs a lot of discipline, and I know that all the Kampfgeschwader asked to be escorted by 26. So I think you can say that in 1940, at least, JG 26 was the best wing for escort. I organized this thing myself, because we didn't have any experience or rules to follow. I split up the escort between direct escort, which flies in direct contact with the bombers, mostly at the same speed, which was much too low. This was about one-third of the total number – one Gruppe. They stayed with the bombers, and defended them – not the best way, but this was the way that the bombers wanted it. Better is the erweiterte ['detached'] escort, which keeps the bomber stream in sight, but can go to one side, and if it finds the enemy, can go attack. Even so, after the combat, it must try to re-establish contact with the bombers after the fighting. And then we had the freie Jagd, which flew in advance of the bombers. This was many times the most successful escort. Of course, it was not seen by the bombers, and the bomber crews didn't trust it. I discussed these tactics with the bombers many, many times, without success. They kept complaining to Göring, who listened to them."

Another novelty introduced by Galland ensured that a full Stabsschwarm of four aircraft would be available for missions. He borrowed experienced NCO pilots from the Staffeln for duty as wingmen – a practice that soon became widespread in the Jagdwaffe.

Galland's first opportunity to lead his Geschwader in combat came this very evening, in the form of a freie Jagd and escort for a raid on Manston airfield by EprGr 210's Bf 110s. JG 26 attacked No. 65 Sqd. off Dover, and claimed three Spitfires; one was in fact shot down, and two force-landed with repairable damage.

23 August

Persistent low clouds and rain restricted Luftwaffe operations over England, but did not prevent Bomber Command from attacking the shipping the Germans were assembling in the French Channel ports. In late evening a formation of six No. 142 Sqd. Battles attempted to bomb invasion barges in Boulogne harbor, but were intercepted by several aircraft from the First and Second Gruppen. Three Battles were claimed destroyed; two were in fact shot down, while two force-landed back in England. The 2nd Staffel's Uffz. Gottfried Haferkorn collided with another aircraft west of Boulogne – whether with a Battle or another Bf 109 is unclear – and was killed.



Oblt. Gustav "Micky" Sprick's crew chief helps him from his cockpit after a mission to England. Major Michel photographs the arrival, while Obfw. Paschmann waits for Sprick's report on his airplane's condition. The Messerschmitt has not yet been painted with a Schlageter shield and the Adamson insignia – Caffiers, August. (*G. Schmidt*)

24 August

Return of fair weather brought a resumption of large-scale Luftwaffe bomber attacks. Still hoping to force Fighter Command to commit its last reserves, Kesselring continued his attacks on airfields, and added aircraft factories to the target list. Attacks on radar stations were stopped, in the (incorrect) belief that they had been unsuccessful. III/JG 26 was one of three Gruppen assigned to escort forty Ju 88s and Do 17s on an early-morning mission. So tight was the formation that only two of the twelve RAF squadrons scrambled against it were able to penetrate the screen. One Third Gruppe Bf 109 was shot down into the Channel; its pilot was picked up by the German rescue service. Two more of the Gruppe's aircraft crash landed in France. Galland led Geschwader-strength missions in late morning and mid-afternoon. The Geschwader shot down seven RAF fighters over the course of the day.

Escort missions had by now settled into a routine. The German fighters would assemble over France at 15–18,000 feet, and climb during the flight across the

Channel to an altitude of 21–24,000 feet. The maximum duration of a Bf 109 combat mission was ninety minutes. As it took half an hour to reach England after take-off, no more than one half hour was available for tactical operations, sufficient to reach just north of London. A red panel lamp came on at the one-quarter fuel level, urging the Bf 109 pilot to break for home, whatever the tactical situation. The Channel was always a psychological burden to the German pilots. However, the efficient German air-sea rescue service was a tremendous boost to morale, at times rescuing downed pilots from the Thames Estuary itself.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 22–24 August 1940

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
8/22/40	Fw.	Philipp	4	6	Spitfire	Dover	8:05 PM	65 Sqd	yes
8/22/40	Lt.	Krug	4 CO	8	Spitfire	Marquise	8:15 PM	65 Sqd	unk
8/22/40	Oblt.	Schöpfel	III CO	13	Spitfire	SE of Dover	8:25 PM	65 Sqd	yes
8/23/40	Ogfr.	Jäckel E.	2	2	Battle	SW of Boulogne	8:20 PM	142 Sqd	yes
8/23/40	Oblt.	Ebersberger	4	2	Battle	Boulogne	8:15 PM	142 Sqd	yes
8/23/40	Lt.	Krug	4 CO	9	Battle	Boulogne	8:25 PM	142 Sqd	yes
8/24/40	Uffz.	Adam B.	2	1	Hurricane	W of Dover			unk
8/24/40	Fw.	Müller W.	3	7	Hurricane	NE of Manston			unk
8/24/40	Oblt.	Ruppert K.	3	3	Hurricane	NE of Dover	4:05 PM	32 Sqd	yes
8/24/40	Obfw.	Meyer W.	5	4	Spitfire	Sheerness-Thames	4:50 PM	54+65 Sqd	yes
8/24/40	Uffz.	Braun	6	1	Spitfire	Southend	4:45 PM	54+65 Sqd	unk
8/24/40	Oblt.	Müncheberg	7 CO	14	Hurricane	Ashford	12:22 PM	151 Sqd	yes
8/24/40	Oblt.	Sprick	8 CO	13	Hurricane	Ashford	12:20 PM	151 Sqd	yes

JG 26 Casualties: 23–24 August 1940

Date	Rank	Name	Cas	Unit	Aircraft	WNR	Mkgs	Place	Time	Cause
8/23/40	Uffz.	Haferkorn, Gottfried	KIA	2	Bf 109E-1			W Boulogne		collision
8/24/40	Fw.	Beese, Artur	no	9	Bf 109E-4		yl 11	St. Inglevert		fighter

25 August

Large-scale raids on No. 11 Group's airfields were successfully driven off by the defenders. Bomber losses were heavy, leading to demands for even closer escort. Again this day JG 26 claimed seven fighters destroyed, and suffered no casualties. Major Galland led a Geschwader-strength freie Jagd and escort mission for a raid on Hawkinge airfield. Spitfires from Nos. 610 and 616 Sqds. were encountered over Dover. Two were shot down in that area, and the 3rd Staffel's Oblt. Kurt Ruppert chased a third across the Channel to Calais, where he shot it down. Its pilot was quickly taken prisoner, but he escaped from POW camp in 1942 and returned to duty.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 25 August 1940

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
8/25/40	Maj.	Galland A.	Ge CO	23	Spitfire	Dungeness-Folkestone	7:50 PM	610+616 Sqd	unk
8/25/40	Lt.	Hafer	I St	2	Hurricane	W of Folkestone			unk
8/25/40	Fw.	Müller W.	3	8	Spitfire	Channel		610+616 Sqd	unk
8/25/40	Fw.	Müller W.	3	9	Spitfire	Dover	7:35 PM	610+616 Sqd	yes
8/25/40	Oblt.	Ruppert K.	3	4	Spitfire	S of Calais	7:50 PM	616 Sqd	yes
8/25/40	Lt.	Bürschgens	7	9	Hurricane	Littlestone			unk
8/25/40	Fw.	Carl	9	3	Spitfire	unknown	7:50 PM	610+616 Sqd	yes

28 August

After two days of rest the Schlagerter fighters re-entered combat. The by now predictable morning build-up over Calais was reported by Dover radar at 0900. It comprised thirty-three bombers escorted by the 120 Bf 109s of JG 26, led by Major Galland. Thirty-two Hurricanes and the twelve Defiants of No. 264 Sqd. were scrambled, making contact just as the bomber formation split up. Half made for Eastchurch, and the rest for Rochford; both were important Fighter Command bases on the banks of the Thames. The Hurricanes were engaged by the First Gruppe, flying high cover, while the Geschwader Stabsschwarm and the Third Gruppe provided close escort for the Eastchurch raiders. Galland spotted a formation of fighters paralleling, and just beneath, the Heinkels. After identifying them as Defiants he led his unit in a full-power dive, pulled up beneath the fighters, and began his attack. The tight British formation was blown apart. Three Defiants went down, and two more suffered serious damage. No. 264 Sqd. was withdrawn to the north the next day; the Defiant was finished as a Fighter Command day fighter.

In the meantime the First Gruppe broke up the Hurricanes' attack, shooting down two from No. 79 Squadron. The second Rotte of Galland's Stabsschwarm became the only German casualties. Hptm. Beyer and his wingman Fw. Karl Straub, who was on loan from the 7th Staffel, were shot down by the intercepting Hurricanes. Both came down near Canterbury and survived the war as prisoners.

29 August

Luftflotte 2 ordered a maximum-strength freie Jagd across Kent for the evening, with only a few bombers along to provoke a reaction from Fighter Command. The five to six hundred Bf 109s and Bf 110s found very few targets. Major Galland missed the mission, and of his three Gruppen only one found targets. Hptm. Pingel led his First Gruppe on its most successful mission to date, claiming five RAF fighters for the loss of Obfw. Hubert Graf von Treuburg, who was killed by Spitfires off Folkestone. Another First Gruppe Messerschmitt ditched in the same area, but its pilot was picked up by the German ASR service.

30 August

Luftflotte 2 staged several large raids against No. 11 Group's airfields in quick succession, hoping to swamp the defenses. An early-morning freie Jagd by the Geschwader failed to provoke a reaction; nor did a noon freie Jagd in support of an attack on Biggin Hill. The evening mission, a freie Jagd and escort of an attack on Detling, resulted in three victory claims, one from each Gruppe. Three pilots ditched in the Channel, but all were picked up.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 28–30 August 1940

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
8/28/40	Maj.	Galland A.	Ge CO	24	Defiant	Faversham	10:00 AM	264 Sqd	unk
8/28/40	Oblt.	Horten	Ge St	1	Defiant	Faversham	10:03 AM	264 Sqd	yes
8/28/40	Oblt.	Horten	Ge St	2	Defiant	Faversham	10:03 AM	264 Sqd	yes
8/28/40	Lt.	Rysavy	2	1	Hurricane	S of Faversham		79 Sqd	unk
8/28/40	Oblt.	Losigkeit	2 CO	3	Hurricane	N of Folkestone	10:05 AM	79 Sqd	yes
8/28/40	Lt.	Haiböck	III St	5	Defiant	E of Canterbury	10:00 AM	264 Sqd	yes
8/28/40	Hptm.	Schöpfel	III CO	14	Defiant	E of Canterbury	10:10 AM	264 Sqd	yes
8/29/40	Hptm.	Pingel	I CO	11	Spitfire	Dungeness	8:06 PM		yes

8/29/40	Hptm.	Pingel	I CO	12	Spitfire	Dungeness	8:07 PM	yes
8/29/40	Oblt.	Henrici	1	3	Spitfire	Littlestone		unk
8/29/40	Obfw.	Müller W.	2	10	Spitfire	Dover		603 Sqd
8/29/40	Lt.	Rysavy	2	2	Hurricane	W of Dover	7:37 PM	85 Sqd
8/30/40	Oblt.	Losigkeit	2 CO	4	Spitfire	SE of Littlestone	7:30 PM	yes
8/30/40	Fw.	Koch	5	1	Hurricane	Dungeness	6:15 PM	253 Sqd
8/30/40	Oblt.	Ebeling	9 CO	12	Hurricane	southern England	6:35 PM	253 Sqd

JG 26 Casualties: 28–30 August 1940

Date	Rank	Name	Cas	Unit	Aircraft	WNr	Mkgs	Place	Time	Cause
8/28/40	Fw.	Straub, Karl	POW	7	Bf 109E-4	1353	wh 13	Goodnestone	10:30 AM	fighter
8/28/40	Oblt.	Beyer, Georg	POW	Ge St	Bf 109E-4	2743		S of Canterbury	11:00 AM	fighter
8/29/40	Obfw.	Treuburg,	KIA	1	Bf 109E-4	1181		Channel –		Spitfire
		Hubert Graf v.						S Folkestone		
8/30/40	Uffz.	Jäckel, Ernst	WIA	2	Bf 109E-1	3650		6km NW of		unknown
								Gris Nez		

31 August

Kesselring ordered the attacks on Fighter Command's bases to continue. By now most of No. 11 Group's fields were in shambles. JG 26 flew three Geschwader-strength missions and one freie Jagd to the airfields on the north side of the Thames Estuary, at the extreme limit of the Bf 109's range. The Geschwader claimed twenty-two victories for the day, but lost five aircraft and pilots, its heaviest loss of pilots for any single day of the Battle. In the morning four waves of bombers, each with a massive escort of Bf 109s and Bf 110s, were sent against the airfields. JG 26 was part of the escort for a Gruppe of Do 17s ordered to hit Debden. As they approached North Weald, a No. 11 Group sector station northeast of London, No. 56 Squadron's twelve Hurricanes rose to defend their base. They lost four fighters to the Messerschmitts, while succeeding in damaging only one German aircraft, which made it back to the Channel for a successful ditching. No. 56 Squadron had to be withdrawn the next day to the relative quiet of No. 10 Group's sector in western England.

Shortly after noon JG 26 was again airborne on a freie Jagd in support of two waves of Do 17s and He 111s dispatched to attack the sector stations at Biggin Hill and Hornchurch and the fighter airfield at Croydon. The Kenley controller was slow to react, and the airfields were all hit before the raids were intercepted. No. 85 Squadron's Hurricanes and No. 603 Squadron's Spitfires chased the raiders back across the Thames Estuary. JG 26 lost two pilots: Oblt. Ludwig Hafer, the First Gruppe adjutant, to a No. 603 Sqd. Spitfire, and Ogfr. Werner Heyer, apparently to a nervous Bf 110 gunner.

Major Galland led a mid-afternoon mission that apparently failed to make contact with the RAF. He took off again at 1810, and led the full Geschwader to a rendezvous with KG 76 for an attack on Hornchurch. Apparently the Stabsschwarm and the Third Gruppe flew detached escort, while the rest of the Geschwader remained with the bombers as close escort. Galland's flight and the Third Gruppe were engaged in combat continuously from the English coast to the target area and back, claiming nine British aircraft for the loss of Fw. Martin Klar, Uffz. Horst Liebeck, and Oblt. Willi Fronhöfer, all taken prisoner. The First and Second Gruppen took their chances as they came, and claimed as many as six fighters without loss.

The fighting on this day was especially fierce, and the claims are difficult to resolve. Fighter Command lost thirty-nine planes in aerial combat – the

Luftwaffe claimed 116. Thirty-four British pilots were killed or wounded, the heaviest RAF casualties of any day of the Battle to date. The Luftwaffe lost thirty-nine aircraft – the RAF claimed ninety-four – of which twenty-eight were fighters; twenty-two German fighter pilots were lost.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 31 August 1940

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
8/31/40	Maj.	Galland A.	Ge CO	25	Spitfire	20km SE of Cambridge	9:42 AM	19 Sqd	yes
8/31/40	Maj.	Galland A.	Ge CO	26	Spitfire	Gravesend	6:50 PM		yes
8/31/40	Oblt.	Horten	Ge St	3	Spitfire	unknown	7:00 PM		yes
8/31/40	Maj.	Galland A.	Ge CO	27	Hurricane	Maidstone	7:03 PM		yes
8/31/40	Hptm.	Pingel	I CO	13	Spitfire	S of London			unk
8/31/40	Oblt.	Henrici	1	4	Hurricane	Gravesend	6:50 PM		yes
8/31/40	Obfw.	Schiffbauer	3	1	Spitfire	Chatham			unk
8/31/40	Lt.	Kosse	5 CO	5	Hurricane	Dungeness	6:55 PM		yes
8/31/40	Fw.	Lüders	6	4	Hurricane	Brentwood	9:42 AM	56 Sqd	unk
8/31/40	Uffz.	Dahmer	6	6	Hurricane	Brentwood	9:45 AM	56 Sqd	yes
8/31/40	Oblt.	Schneider W.	6 CO	3	Hurricane	London	7:00 PM		yes
8/31/40	Uffz.	Dahmer	6	7	Spitfire	Gravesend	7:45 PM		unk
8/31/40	Hptm.	Schöpfel	III CO	15	Spitfire	Braintree	10:00 AM	56 Sqd	yes
8/31/40	Oblt.	Mietusch	7	2	Spitfire	Chelmsford	9:55 AM	19 Sqd	unk
8/31/40	Oblt.	Müncheberg	7 CO	15	Hurricane	NW of Braintree	10:00 AM	56 Sqd	unk
8/31/40	Lt.	Christennecke	7	1	Spitfire	N of Sevenoaks	7:00 PM	222 Sqd	unk
8/31/40	Oblt.	Sprick	8 CO	14	Hurricane	Folkestone	7:05 PM	85 Sqd	yes
8/31/40	Oblt.	Sprick	8 CO	15	Hurricane	Folkestone	7:15 PM	85 Sqd	yes
8/31/40	Fw.	Jäckel K.	8	3	Hurricane	unknown	7:40 PM		yes
8/31/40	Oblt.	Ebeling	9 CO	13	Hurricane	North Weald	9:50 AM	56 Sqd	yes
8/31/40	Oblt.	Ebeling	9 CO	14	Hurricane	NW of Folkestone	7:10 PM	85 Sqd	yes
8/31/40	Oblt.	Ebeling	9 CO	15	Hurricane	NW of Folkestone	7:20 PM	85 Sqd	yes



Oblt. Sprick, the 8th Staffel Kapitän, discusses the previous mission with Fw. Konrad Jäckel (POW 29 Oct 40), while Obfw. Paschmann (left) listens in – Caffiers, August. (*G. Schmidt*)

JG 26 Casualties: 31 August 1940

Date	Rank	Name	Cas	Unit	Aircraft	WNr	Mkgs	Place	Time	Cause
8/31/40	Uffz.	Heyer, Werner	KIA	6	Bf 109E-4	5393		Canterbury		Bf 110?
8/31/40	Oblt.	Hafer, Ludwig	KIA	1 St	Bf 109E-1	4806		Dungeness	1:45 PM	Spitfire
8/31/40	Oblt.	Ebeling, Heinz	no	9 CO	Bf 109E-4	3712	yl 3	Channel		fighter
8/31/40	Fw.	Klar, Martin	POW	7	Bf 109E-1	3464		Allington/ E London	7:30 PM	Hurricane
8/31/40	Uffz.	Liebeck, Horst	POW	7	Bf 109E-1	6309		Stansted/ London	6:40 PM	Spitfire
8/31/40	Oblt.	Fronhöfer, Willy	POW	9	Bf 109E-4	1184	yl 10	Ulcombe/ London	7:45 PM	Spitfire

1 September

This was another day of heavy airfield attacks. The London dock area was also bombed in retaliation for RAF raids on Berlin, which had themselves been ordered to answer the Luftwaffe's (inadvertent) London attacks of 25 August.

JG 26 flew one full-strength mission. The Geschwader paired up once again with KG 76. The target for today was Kenley airfield, which was bombed before the defending fighters arrived. After the resulting battle JG 26 filed eleven claims; data for two remain missing. The Geschwader's principal opponents were Nos. 79 and 85 Squadrons, which lost nine Hurricanes destroyed or badly damaged, and No. 72 Squadron, two of whose Spitfires suffered repairable damage. The one Geschwader aircraft that failed to return was that of the 7th Staffel's Oblt. Josef Bürschgens, a ten-victory Experte. He attacked a Spitfire that was attempting to penetrate a circle of Bf 110s, and was hit by a Zerstörer gunner who was firing at every single-engined aircraft he could see. His engine dead, Bürschgens attempted to glide to the Channel, but was forced to crash-land his aircraft near Rye, and after recovering from his injuries spent the rest of the war in Canada.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 1 September 1940

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
9/1/40	Maj.	Galland A.	Ge CO	28	Hurricane	SE edge of London	2:55 PM	79+85 Sqd	yes
9/1/40	Oblt.	Henrici	I	7	Hurricane	S of London		79+85 Sqd	unk
9/1/40	Oblt.	Henrici	I	5	Hurricane	S of London	3:07 PM	79+85 Sqd	yes
9/1/40	Oblt.	Ebersberger	4	3	Spitfire	Dungeness	2:40 PM	72 Sqd	yes
9/1/40	Fw.	Roth	4	5	Spitfire	Cranbrook	2:50 PM	72 Sqd	yes
9/1/40	Hptm.	Schöpfel	III CO	16	Spitfire	London	3:00 PM	72 Sqd	yes
9/1/40	Lt.	Bürschgens	7	10	Spitfire	Croydon	2:50 PM	72 Sqd	unk
9/1/40	Oblt.	Müncheberg	7 CO	16	Hurricane	W of Goodhurst	2:52 PM	79+85 Sqd	yes
9/1/40	Oblt.	Sprick	8 CO	16	Hurricane	London	3:05 PM	79+85 Sqd	yes

3 September

After resting the next day, during which the heavy attacks on Fighter Command's bases continued, JG 26 returned to action. The Geschwader escorted the Dorniers of KG 2 to North Weald, a sector station north of London, which was heavily damaged for the loss of one Do 17. Eight No. 11 Group squadrons tried to reach the Dorniers on their return flight. No. 257 Sqd.'s attempt cost the Squadron four Hurricanes destroyed or badly damaged. As No. 603 Squadron's eight Spitfires tried to go into line astern formation to attack the Dorniers over Margate, they were hit by the Second Gruppe from above. Three machines fell in flames. Oblt. Eckardt Roch, the Gruppe adjutant, was killed; two severely burned British pilots bailed out into the Thames Estuary. Both Spitfires were claimed by the Second Gruppe's Kommandeur, Hptm. Erich Bode, as his first victories of the war. No. 603 Squadron had now lost fourteen Spitfires destroyed, four pilots killed, and six pilots wounded in seven days in the combat zone.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 3 September 1940

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
9/3/40	Maj.	Galland A.	Ge CO	29	Hurricane	Chelmsford	11:32 AM	257 Sqd	yes
9/3/40	Hptm.	Bode	II CO	1	Spitfire	Margate	11:04 AM	603 Sqd	yes
9/3/40	Hptm.	Bode	II CO	2	Spitfire	Margate	11:08 AM	603 Sqd	unk
9/3/40	Fw.	Hoffmann H.	4	4	Spitfire	Hockley	11:20 AM	603 Sqd	unk

9/3/40	Fw.	Roth	4	6	Hurricane	Wickford	11:25 AM	257 Sqd	yes
9/3/40	Lt.	Haiböck	III St	6	Spitfire	Rochester	11:05 AM		unk
9/3/40	Oblt.	Sprick	8 CO	17	Spitfire	Rochester/Thames Estuary	11:10 AM		yes
9/3/40	Oblt.	Meyer	8	1	Spitfire	Thames Estuary	11:16 AM		yes
9/3/40	Uffz.	Küpper	8	1	unknown	unknown	11:10 AM		unk
9/3/40	Lt.	Naumann	9	1	Spitfire	Thames Estuary	11:10 AM		unk



A Second Gruppe Bf 109E receives the concerted attention of the maintenance staff – Marquise, late Summer. (*Meyer*)

4 September

Major Galland led two Geschwader escort missions in attacks on Eastchurch airfield. Neither encountered RAF aircraft. No. 11 Group's controllers were under orders not to vector squadrons to intercept Luftwaffe formations containing only fighters, even though some bomber raids slipped through unhindered.

5 September

In another of the ill-considered decisions that marred its conduct of the Battle, the Luftwaffe began issuing bomb-carrying aircraft to one Staffel of each fighter Gruppe. The principal model used was the Bf 109E-4/B, which carried a single 250 kg (551 lb) bomb. Göring had been so impressed with the performance of the first Jagdbomber (Jabo) units, EprGr 210 and II/LG 2, that the pure fighter units would now be called on to act as bombers. The 4th Staffel flew its first practice Jabo mission on this date. The day was otherwise a slow one for the Geschwader; a freie Jagd mission to the London area made no contact.

6 September

From mid-morning Luftflotte 2 sent successive waves of bombers against the airfields and aircraft factories in southeastern England. No. 11 Group quickly called on No. 10 Group for support, and the latter's squadrons began streaming



A Luftwaffe band entertains the mechanics in the Second Gruppe maintenance area – Marquise, late Summer. (*Reimers via Ebert*)



The first JG 26 Kommodore, Genmaj. Ritter von Schleich, visits the newest, Major Galland. (*Kirch*)

eastward. Major Galland took off from Audembert at 0940 and led a Geschwader-strength escort mission and freie Jagd to Farnborough. The Geschwader formation held together until the target was reached, and then fended off a succession of attacking squadrons. No. 10 Group's No. 234 Squadron was first to arrive, and lost two of their number to the Second Gruppe's Stabsschwarm. The Third Gruppe, which had led the raid on a freie Jagd, was next to get involved. Oblt. Müncheberg's 7th Staffel Schwarm was bounced by No. 234 Sqd. Spitfires and lost three aircraft: Oblt. Hans Christinecke was taken prisoner, but Gefr. Karl Bieker and Gefr. Peter Holzapfel were killed. Holzapfel's aircraft was possibly hit also by a Hurricane of No. 303 Squadron, which reached the formation near the coast and claimed two bombers and five fighters for the loss of three Hurri-

canes destroyed and two damaged. Further inland Galland and the First Gruppe, tied to the bombers as close escort, shot down three No. 601 Sqd. Hurricanes. The 9th Staffel suffered one casualty: a wounded but unidentified pilot crash-landed his Messerschmitt on the French coast.

Major Galland also led the afternoon mission, a Geschwader-strength escort of an attack on Rochester airfield. The unit claimed the destruction of five Spitfires, and suffered no losses.

Most of No. 11 Group's airfields were now in desperate condition. Although neither side knew it, the Germans were winning the war of attrition in the air. Fighter Command's shortage of pilots, especially experienced leaders, had become so serious that on this date Air Marshal Dowding had to abandon his policy of resting and fighting his squadrons as units. Depleted squadrons would now be downgraded to training status after transferring their experienced survivors to units still in combat. It is obvious today that the Luftwaffe's strategy since Adlertag had been correct. It was now within a week of winning the battle for air supremacy over southeastern England. The next day it would abruptly change its objective, and ensure Britain's survival.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 6 September 1940

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
9/6/40	Maj.	Galland A.	Ge CO	30	Hurricane	Tonbridge	10:20 AM	601 Sqd	yes
9/6/40	Uffz.	Adam B.	2		Hurricane	N of Rye	10:20 AM	601 Sqd	unk
9/6/40	Lt.	Ulenberg	2	4	Hurricane	SW of Tonbridge	10:25 AM	601 Sqd	yes
9/6/40	Hptm.	Bode	II CO	3	Spitfire	Redhill	10:10 AM	234 Sqd	yes
9/6/40	Oblt.	Ebersberger	II St	4	Spitfire	Redhill	10:10 AM	234 Sqd	yes
9/6/40	Lt.	Borris	4	5	Hurricane	Folkestone	9:55 AM	501 Sqd	unk
9/6/40	Lt.	Kosse	5 CO	6	Hurricane	Guildford	10:10 AM	303 Sqd	unk
9/6/40	Oblt.	Schneider W.	6 CO	4	Spitfire	Littlestone	2:25 PM	72 Sqd	yes
9/6/40	Obfw.	Gottlob	6	1	Spitfire	Littlestone	2:28 PM	72 Sqd	yes
9/6/40	Oblt.	Schneider W.	6 CO	5	Spitfire	Littlestone	2:29 PM	72 Sqd	yes
9/6/40	Hptm.	Schöpfel	III CO		Hurricane	Dungeness	10:30 AM	303 Sqd	no
9/6/40	Oblt.	Müncheberg	7 CO	17	Hurricane	Dungeness	10:28 AM	303 Sqd	yes
9/6/40	Fw.	Gärtner	8	4	Spitfire	unknown	2:15 PM		unk
9/6/40	Oblt.	Ebeling	9 CO	16	Hurricane	NW of Dover	11:05 AM	303 Sqd	yes
9/6/40	Fw.	Carl	9	4	Spitfire	unknown	2:15 PM		unk

JG 26 Casualties: 1-6 September 1940

Date	Rank	Name	Cas	Unit	Aircraft	WNr	Mkgs	Place	Time	Cause
9/1/40	Lt.	Bürschgens, Josef	POW	7	Bf 109E-1	3892	wh 11	Wittersham/Rye	3:03 PM	Bf 110
9/3/40	Oblt.	Roch, Eckardt	KIA	II St	Bf 109E-4	823		Margate	11:35 AM	Spitfire
9/6/40	Gefr.	Bieker, Karl	KIA	7	Bf 109E-1	3578		Channel/ S London	10:20 AM	Spitfire
9/6/40	Gefr.	Holzapfel, Peter	KIA	7	Bf 109E-1	3877	wh 5	Channel/ S London	10:20 AM	Spitfire
9/6/40	Oblt.	Christinnecke, Hans	POW	7	Bf 109E-4	2781		Hothfield/ Ashford	10:20 AM	Spitfire

Chapter Five

THE BATTLE OF BRITAIN II:

The Battle over London

7 September 1940 – February 1941

7 September

In the afternoon Reichsmarschall Göring, having “taken over personal command of the Luftwaffe in its war against England”, stood with his entourage at Cap Blanc Nez while the largest Luftwaffe formation ever assembled passed overhead. Its target was London. His air force’s mission had been changed from a tactical one – gaining air supremacy over the projected battlefield of south-eastern England – to a far more nebulous strategic task. Britain’s will to continue the war was now to be broken by bombing the civilian population. There would be no invasion.

Nearly one thousand aircraft crossed the Thames Estuary. They were stepped from 14,000 to 23,000 feet, and covered 800 square miles. JG 26 was buried far back in the last wave, escorting KG 30’s Ju 88s. The Schlager fighter performed with their usual efficiency; the sources conflict, but KG 30 lost no more than two aircraft this day. The Third Gruppe claimed the destruction of four Spitfires. These were probably from No. 603 Squadron, which lost one Spitfire that crashed and three that force-landed with serious damage (abbreviated 1-3 losses). Oblt. Horten and Hptm. Pingel each claimed a fighter in the widespread fighting over London. The Second Gruppe was shut out from the scoring, and lost two pilots as prisoners: the 6th Staffel’s Uffz. Ernst Braun and the 4th Staffel Kapitän, Oblt. Hans Krug, whose force-landed fighter gave the RAF an early look at a Bf 109E-4/B Jagdbomber.

Göring’s loss of confidence in his fighters had much to do with the decision to switch targets to London. His undisciplined fighter pilots would no longer be given free rein to fly their freie Jagden, which had obviously not been nearly as successful in shooting down British fighters as his pilots had claimed. He demanded ever closer escort formations, in part so that the bomber leaders could monitor the fighters’ performance. While in France Göring had a memorable confrontation with Adolf Galland, who recalled in an interview:

“For more than forty minutes outside his train Göring blamed Mölders and myself for the bombers’ high losses. When he asked us what he could do to improve the capability of our units, Mölders wanted his Geschwader equip-

ped with the DB 601N engine, while I said I wanted mine equipped with Spitfires. Göring retorted, 'We have the best fighter in the world! Don't blame me!' I tried to tell him otherwise, replying that the Spitfire was better able to reduce speed, because of its lower wing loading. It was also better able to turn at lower speeds. Our advantage was not in turning, but in flying straight ahead, diving, and climbing. Our turns were not tight enough to remain within sight of the bombers at all times, as Göring was requesting – but of course, that was the end of the discussion."

The DB 601N requested by Mölders equipped the Bf 109E-4/N, which had a better high-altitude performance than the standard Bf 109E-4. The new engine's increased compression ratio dictated a requirement for 96 octane fuel instead of the standard 87 octane. High octane fuel was always in short supply in Germany, and the E-4/N was given a restricted production run. JG 26 was one of the few Geschwader to receive this model. Galland flew a Bf 109E-4/N for the first time on 7 September. This airplane, W.Nr. 5819, would remain his personal aircraft for the next seven months.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 7 September 1940

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
9/7/40	Oblt.	Horten	Ge St	4	Spitfire	unknown	6:55 PM	41+222 Sqd	yes
9/7/40	Hptm.	Pingel	I CO	14	Spitfire	Tonbridge	7:25 PM	41+222 Sqd	yes
9/7/40	Hptm.	Schöpfel	III CO	17	Spitfire	London	6:45 PM	603 Sqd	yes
9/7/40	Oblt.	Müncheberg	7 CO	18	Spitfire	SE of London	6:45 PM	603 Sqd	unk
9/7/40	Oblt.	Ebeling	9 CO	17	Spitfire	SE of London	6:50 PM	603 Sqd	unk
9/7/40	Oblt.	Ebeling	9 CO		Spitfire	SE of London	6:50 PM	603 Sqd	no

JG 26 Casualties: 7 September 1940

Date	Rank	Name	Cas	Unit	Aircraft	WNr	Mkgs	Place	Time	Cause
9/7/40	Oblt.	Krug, Hans	POW	4 CO	Bf 109E-4/B	5385	wh 12	Pluckley, Kent	7:00 PM	fighter
9/7/40	Uffz.	Braun, Ernst	POW	6	Bf 109E-4	735		London	7:00 PM	fighter

8 September

Major Galland led the Geschwader on an escort mission to the London docks and the oil installations along the Thames, which were still burning from previous raids. The unit made no contact with Fighter Command, but on the return flight the 1st Staffel's Gefr. Scheidt encountered a Coastal Command Blenheim withdrawing after an attack on invasion shipping in Calais harbor, and shot it down.

9 September

In the evening the Geschwader returned to the London docks. Hptm. Schöpfel had another successful mission, claiming three Spitfires, which brought his victory total to twenty and made him eligible for the Knight's Cross. His victims were probably from No. 92 Sqd., which lost three Spitfires in a battle over its Biggin Hill base.

10 September

Poor weather over England and the Continent kept the German bombers

grounded. The Geschwader scrambled two flights against RAF bombers, without result.

11 September

In mid-afternoon Major Galland led a Geschwader escort mission to the harbor installations along the Thames. Faulty routing led to the early return of much of the escort, which included JG 2, JG 51, JG 53, JG 54, and LG 2, and the He 111s of KG 1 and KG 26 took heavy losses. JG 26 scored several victories in the confused fighting, and suffered no losses. The Geschwader's evening task, according to Galland's logbook, was to escort a formation in an attack on a British convoy between Margate and Dover. The pilots of the Third Gruppe somehow found themselves over Kent, where they shot down several fighters. On their return they apparently encountered some Coastal Command Blenheims returning from an attack on shipping in Calais harbor. Hptm. Schöpfel may have shot down one of these, but the claim was not filed. He did receive his Knight's Cross on this date for his twenty victories, the second such award in the Geschwader.

14 September

After a two-day stand down owing to poor weather, the Geschwader flew two sweeps over London. Only the first was contested; JG 26 claimed five fighters for the loss of the First Gruppe adjutant, Oblt. Kurt Dähne, whose Messerschmitt collided with a No. 253 Sqd. Hurricane southeast of Maidstone. A 9th Staffel pilot force-landed his aircraft at St. Inglevert after the battle. Described as having 60 per cent damage, the Messerschmitt was undoubtedly written off.

Given the opportunity to fly more *freie Jagden* than usual, the fighters of Luftflotten 2 and 3 had a very successful day. They claimed twenty-five British fighters – true losses were twelve destroyed and nine damaged – for the loss of only four Messerschmitts.

Oblt. Müncheberg scored his twentieth victory on this date, and was awarded the Knight's Cross, as was Hptm. Rolf Pingel. Pingel was several victories short of twenty; either his Spanish victories were counted in his total, or the award was based in part on intangibles such as the leadership skills he had demonstrated since joining the Geschwader.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 8–14 September 1940

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
9/8/40	Gefr.	Scheidt	1	1	Blenheim	Channel		153 Sqd	unk
9/9/40	Hptm.	Schöpfel	III CO	18	Spitfire	Thames Estuary	6:05 PM	92 Sqd	yes
9/9/40	Hptm.	Schöpfel	III CO	19	Spitfire	Thames Estuary	6:07 PM	92 Sqd	yes
9/9/40	Hptm.	Schöpfel	III CO	20	Spitfire	Thames Estuary	6:11 PM	92 Sqd	yes
9/9/40	Lt.	Ripke	8	3	Spitfire	Thames Estuary	6:20 PM	92 Sqd	yes
9/11/40	Maj.	Galland A.	Ge CO	31	Hurricane	NW of Dungeness	4:20 PM	501 Sqd	yes
9/11/40	Oblt.	Westphal	III St	3	Spitfire	unknown			unk
9/11/40	Oblt.	Westphal	III St	4	Hurricane	unknown			unk
9/11/40	Hptm.	Schöpfel	III CO		Blenheim	unknown	5:30 PM	235 Sqd	no
9/11/40	Oblt.	Müncheberg	7 CO	19	Spitfire	E of Ashford	7:25 PM	66+92 Sqd	unk
9/11/40	Fw.	Gärtner	8	5	Hurricane	SE of London	7:30 PM		yes
9/11/40	Fw.	Grzymalla	8	6	Spitfire	SE of London	7:33 PM	66+92 Sqd	yes
9/14/40	Maj.	Galland A.	Ge CO	32	Hurricane	SE edge of London	5:03 PM	253 Sqd	yes
9/14/40	Hptm.	Pingel	I CO	15	Hurricane	SE of Maidstone	4:50 PM	253 Sqd	yes
9/14/40	Oblt.	Dähne	I St	2	Hurricane	SE of Maidstone	5:03 PM	253 Sqd	no
9/14/40	Oblt.	Ruppert K.	3	5	Hurricane	NE of Dover	4:23 PM	253 Sqd	yes
9/14/40	Oblt.	Ebersberger	II St	5	Spitfire	Eastchurch	5:10 PM	222 Sqd	yes
9/14/40	Oblt.	Müncheberg	7 CO	20	Spitfire	S of Maidstone	5:05 PM	222 Sqd	unk

Date	Rank	Name	Cas	Unit	Aircraft	WNr	Mkgs	Place	Time	Cause
9/14/40	Oblt.	Dähne, Kurt	KIA	I St	Bf 109E-1	5813	<	Teynham, Kent	5:05 PM	Hurricane

15 September

The Geschwader did not take part in the day's first raid, but was held back to escort returning aircraft and the ASR forces. The bombers took an abnormally long time to assemble this morning, giving No. 11 Group ample time to concentrate its squadrons, now flying in pairs. No. 12 Group's clumsy "big wing" of five squadrons was brought into action. A dozen squadrons of Hurricanes and Spitfires met KG 76 over London and turned it back with heavy losses.

Galland led the Geschwader in a freie Jagd in support of the afternoon raid. This too was slow to develop. According to the British, the 114 Heinkels and Dorniers first circled over Maidstone and then took thirty minutes to cover the sixty miles from the coast to London. Fighter Command scrambled twenty-eight squadrons of Spitfires and Hurricanes; all eventually made contact. The Bf 109s of JG 26 were hard pressed, but attempted to keep the British fighters at a distance. Galland engaged Hurricanes and Spitfires in a whirling mêlée for ten whole minutes without result. He then spotted an inattentive squadron below and dove to the attack; he and his wingman Oblt. Horten each shot down a No. 310 Sqd. Hurricane. Other Geschwader pilots downed three Spitfires before the Messerschmitts had to break off combat because of low fuel and make their way back to France. Chaos erupted behind them. Over eastern London the bomber formations were attacked by 170 fighters. Most of the bomber formations wheeled around without bombing their assigned targets; the bomber leaders stated that their targets were obscured by clouds, but the RAF fighter pilots were convinced that they had frightened the Germans into turning back.

As the bombers withdrew to the southeast, it was obvious to everyone in the air that the Luftwaffe had suffered a massive defeat. For the day the Luftwaffe lost fifty-nine aircraft; the RAF, thirty-one. The slight respite given Fighter Command by the German decision to target London had allowed it to regain its strength. The battle of attrition that was to have wiped out Fighter Command was instead threatening to destroy the cream of the Luftwaffe's offensive force, its bomber units.

16 September

Persistent rain clouds precluded any major raids. The Geschwader took off for an early-morning sweep of London, but after fifty minutes in the air it was recalled owing to poor visibility.

17 September

JG 26 joined several other Jagdgeschwader in a massive sweep of southeastern England. The unit was unsuccessful in drawing many RAF fighters into combat, and claimed only a single Spitfire. The engine of Uffz. Heinz Bock's Bf 109E-1 failed over England, and he was forced to land his aircraft near Rye.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 15–17 September 1940

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
9/15/40	Maj.	Galland A.	Ge CO	33	Hurricane	Thames Estuary	3:30 PM	310 Sqd	yes
9/15/40	Oblt.	Horten	Ge St	5	Hurricane	Thames Estuary	3:30 PM	310 Sqd	yes
9/15/40	Oblt.	Losigkeit	2 CO	5	Spitfire	SE of London	3:40 PM	92 Sqd	yes
9/15/40	Obfw.	Meyer W.	5	5	Spitfire	London	3:35 PM	19 Sqd	yes
9/15/40	Fw.	Lüders	6	5	Spitfire	Channel	4:00 PM	19 Sqd	yes
9/17/40	Oblt.	Sprick	8 CO	18	Spitfire	Gravesend	4:35 PM		yes

JG 26 Casualties: 17 September 1940

Date	Rank	Name	Cas	Unit	Aircraft	WNr	Mkgs	Place	Time	Cause
9/17/40	Uffz.	Bock, Heinz	POW	7	Bf 109E-1	6294	wh 2	Rye	5:30 PM	engine

18 September

Today Fighter Command, and more specifically No. 11 Group's Air Marshal Park, demonstrated an ever-improving ability to counter the Luftwaffe's every move, on an hour-to-hour basis. JG 26 participated in a large freie Jagd in the morning that was as unsuccessful as that of the previous day. Kesselring next sent over small formations of bombers mixed with numerous fighters, but only a few British squadrons were sent up in response. The JG 26 Stabsschwarm bounced No. 46 Sqd. near Rochester, and Galland downed three of the Squadron's Hurricanes in short order; the rest of the Geschwader claimed two more fighters. The next raid offered Park a real target – a full Gruppe of Ju 88s, which targeted the oil installations at Gravesend – and he met it with fourteen No. 11 Group squadrons, which shot down nine bombers. According to Galland's logbook, JG 26 was assigned to escort this force. Something obviously went quite wrong, but no conclusions can be drawn from the data available. The Geschwader made no claims and suffered no losses on this mission.

19 September

Poor weather prevented most flying. Four small formations were scrambled against RAF raids on the invasion harbors, without result. Hitler ordered Operation Seelöwe, the invasion of England, to be postponed indefinitely.

20 September

The Luftwaffe's tactics changed yet again. Twenty-two II/LG 2 Bf 109s flew the first Jabo raid to bomb from medium altitude, supported by several Jagdgruppen flying freie Jagden. The detached escort for the raiders was supplied by one or more Gruppen of JG 26, led by their Kommodore. The Jabos crossed the English coast at 25,000 feet, reduced altitude to 12,000 feet, dropped their bombs over London, and turned about, unchallenged by the defenders. The No. 11 Group controllers had recalled their airborne squadrons when it became apparent that the formation contained only fighters; they now countermanded their orders and tried to redirect their squadrons toward the retiring raiders. Released from their escort responsibilities, the JG 26 formation leaders went hunting for targets, and soon found them among the squadrons apparently milling about aimlessly below. Most Fighter Command squadrons still flew in their tight pre-war formations that forced pilots to concentrate on stationkeeping

rather than looking out for the enemy. Such formations could usually be attacked with impunity; it was only after their formations split up and combat became individual that the British fighters' superiority in turning combat became relevant, and the RAF pilots had a chance to score.

Major Galland spotted a Spitfire formation below him at 14,000 feet and dove at full speed as soon as it turned away from him. Not a single British pilot had a clear view of the Messerschmitt as it fired a burst at the right-hand aircraft in the leading Vee and dove past the formation. The Spitfire fell away and crashed near Rochester, its pilot dead. The Spitfires, 222 Squadron's B Flight, were bounced yet again after they re-formed, and lost two more Spitfires over the Thames Estuary, probably to II/JG 2. In the meantime Hptm. Seifert led the First Gruppe in a bounce of No. 253 Squadron, which was orbiting the Maidstone area at 14,000 feet, and shot down two Hurricanes.

It was now time for the Messerschmitts to head for the Channel. This had been the Jagdwaffe's most successful mission in some time. Jafü 2 claimed fifteen fighters for the loss of two Bf 109s and damage to another. Fighter Command's true losses were eight fighters lost and four damaged. The Luftwaffe's fighters could best Fighter Command any time they were matched up on anything like equal terms; but the tactical surprise attained by the Jabo attack would not be repeated, and the Jabo raids themselves, although galling to the British defenders, made no sense whatsoever from a strategic standpoint.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 18–20 September 1940

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
9/18/40	Maj.	Galland A.	Ge CO	34	Hurricane	unknown	1:35 PM	46 Sqd	yes
9/18/40	Maj.	Galland A.	Ge CO	36	Hurricane	W Rochester	1:55 PM	46 Sqd	yes
9/18/40	Maj.	Galland A.	Ge CO	35	Hurricane	W Rochester	1:52 PM	46 Sqd	yes
9/18/40	Fw.	Grzymalla	8	7	Spitfire	London	2:15 PM		yes
9/18/40	Oblt.	Ebeling	9 CO	18	Hurricane	London	1:50 PM		unk
9/20/40	Maj.	Galland A.	Ge CO	37	Spitfire	S Hornchurch	12:05 PM	222 Sqd	yes
9/20/40	Hptm.	Seifert	3 CO	5	Hurricane	Thames Estuary	12:25 PM	253 Sqd	yes
9/20/40	Hptm.	Seifert	3 CO	6	Hurricane	Maidstone	12:37 PM	253 Sqd	yes
9/20/40	Obfw.	Gottlob	6	2	Hurricane	London	12:15 PM	605 Sqd	yes

21 September

Kesselring ordered up only a few nuisance raids. Major Galland led the escort for one of these, and gained the Jagdwaffe's only success, claiming a Spitfire west of Ashford. The British aircraft, from No. 92 Squadron, force-landed near Hildenborough.

22 September

Fog kept most aircraft grounded. The Geschwader sent up a few aircraft to counter reported RAF raiders, but without success.

23 September

Kesselring tried a variety of tactics over the next few weeks. Sperrle's Luftflotte 3 in northwestern France had switched to night bombing when its fighters were transferred to Calais. Luftflotte 2 now began night attacks as well, while sending fighters alone, and fighters interspersed with bombers by day. JG 26 scored heavily during this period whenever the British chose to do battle. On this day's massive freie Jagd north of the Thames Estuary the Geschwader's pilots claimed

ten Hurricanes and Spitfires out of Jafü 2's total score of twenty-one. However, Fighter Command losses for the entire day totalled only eleven, and it is impossible to identify many of the Geschwader's opponents. The Third Gruppe lost two pilots, Obfw. Gerhard Grzymalla and Fw. Arnold Küpper; both were shot down by Spitfires over Kent and captured. Since their crash-landings were observed by their opponents, the victors are known to have been from Biggin Hill's No. 92 Squadron, which in turn lost one Spitfire to the Gruppe's pilots.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 21–23 September 1940

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
9/21/40	Maj.	Galland A.	Ge CO	38	Spitfire	W of Ashford – Canterbury	7:25 PM	92 Sqd	yes
9/23/40	Maj.	Galland A.	Ge CO	39	Hurricane	N of Rochester	10:45 AM	257 Sqd	yes
9/23/40	Maj.	Galland A.	Ge CO	40	Hurricane	N of Rochester	10:45 AM		yes
9/23/40	Uffz.	Fröhlich	2	1	Spitfire	Channel	3:20 PM		yes
9/23/40	Uffz.	Bluder	4	1	Spitfire	Folkestone	11:05 AM		yes
9/23/40	Oblt.	Schneider W.	6 CO	6	Hurricane	Margate	11:00 AM		yes
9/23/40	Obfw.	Gottlob	6	3	Hurricane	Thames Estuary	11:10 AM		yes
9/23/40	Oblt.	Grawatsch	6	1	Hurricane	Thames Estuary	11:10 AM		yes
9/23/40	Oblt.	Schneider W.	6	7	Hurricane	Thames Estuary	11:10 AM		yes
9/23/40	Oblt.	Sprick	8 CO	19	Spitfire	Thames Estuary	10:35 AM	92 Sqd	yes
9/23/40	Gefr.	Hornatscheck	9	1	Spitfire	Thames Estuary	10:45 AM	92 Sqd	yes

JG 26 Casualties: 23 September 1940

Date	Rank	Name	Cas	Unit	Aircraft	WNR	Mkgs	Place	Time	Cause
9/23/40	Fw.	Küpper, Arnold	POW	8	Bf 109E-4	3735	bk 4	I of Grain/S of London	10:55 AM	Spitfire
9/23/40	Obfw.	Grzymalla, Gerhard	POW	8	Bf 109E-4	5817	bk 9	Biddenden/S of London	10:45 AM	Spitfire

24 September

Luftflotte 2 sent a few bombers toward London, but they turned back before the target was reached. Major Galland led the detached escort, and downed his fortieth opponent, a Hurricane. He led an unsuccessful freie Jagd in the afternoon, and was then summoned to Berlin, where Hitler awarded him the Oak Leaves to the Knight's Cross – the third Wehrmacht member to be so honored.

25 September

The Luftflotte 3 fighter units, which had reinforced Luftflotte 2 in anticipation of Operation Seelöwe, returned to their bases in northwestern France, a move followed with interest by the British radar operators. RAF reconnaissance pilots reported a marked reduction in the number of barges docked in the Channel ports. Great Britain was no longer in immediate danger of invasion. Bad weather kept the Geschwader on the ground except for a few fruitless intercept sorties.

26 September

Newly-reinforced, Luftflotte 3 resumed daylight raids with a highly successful raid on the Woolston Supermarine factory which temporarily brought Spitfire production to a halt. JG 26, and the rest of Jafü 2's fighters, remained grounded, except for the usual scrambles against real and imagined RAF raids.

27 September

Luftflotte 2 returned to combat, sending the Ju 88s of KG 77 and several waves of bomb-carrying Bf 109s and Bf 110s over southeastern England. The contribution of JG 26 is unknown; it claimed no victories or losses.

28 September

The combination of small formations of Ju 88s covered by large numbers of fighters was successful in bringing a large part of No. 11 Group to battle. Major Galland had not yet returned from Berlin, but JG 26 flew two Geschwader-strength escort missions and filed six claims, although details are available for only four. The Hurricanes and Spitfires were already up in strength when the Geschwader crossed the coast on the morning mission, and all three Gruppen saw combat. The 3rd Staffel's Fw. Fritz Schür was shot down by Spitfires of No. 603 and No. 605 Squadrons and crashed in the Channel. The afternoon mission was also actively opposed. The First Gruppe engaged No. 249 Squadron's Hurricanes over Maidstone. Hptm. Pingel shot down one but his aircraft was itself badly damaged; he ditched near Hastings and was rescued uninjured by the German ASR service. For the day the Jagdwaffe demonstrated once again its skill when unencumbered by heavy escort responsibilities. Fighter Command lost seventeen fighters destroyed and five badly damaged, and suffered ten pilots killed; the Germans lost only three fighters and one pilot.



The 6th Staffel's Uffz. Hugo Dahmer in his "brown 8" – Marquise, Summer 1940. (*Dölling via Rasse*)

JG 26 Victory Claims: 24–28 September 1940

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
9/24/40	Maj.	Galland A.	Ge CO	41	Hurricane	Rochester	10:00 AM	17 Sqd	yes
9/24/40	Uffz.	Dahmer	6	8	Hurricane	Southend	10:55 AM		yes
9/28/40	Hptm.	Pingel	I CO	16	Hurricane	Maidstone	2:40 PM	249 Sqd	yes
9/28/40	Lt.	Ulenberg	2	5	Spitfire	Ashford	2:45 PM		yes

9/28/40	Oblt.	Schneider W.	6 CO	8	Spitfire	Canterbury	11:35 AM	603 Sqd	yes
9/28/40	Oblt.	Sprick	8 CO	20	Hurricane	Canterbury	11:30 AM	501 Sqd	unk

JG 26 Casualties: 28 September 1940

Date	Rank	Name	Cas	Unit	Aircraft	WNR	Mkgs	Place	Time	Cause
9/28/40	Fw.	Schür, Fritz	KIA	3	Bf 109E-1	6273		SE of Dover/ Channel	11:45 AM	Spitfire
9/28/40	Hptm.	Pingel, Rolf	WIA	I CO	Bf 109E-4	3756		Hastings/ Channel	3:00 PM	Hurricane

29 September

The Geschwader's one escort mission failed to contact the RAF.

30 September

Kesselring and Sperrle returned to heavy day attacks. Fighter Command was ready for them, and the bombers were repulsed with heavy losses. These proved to be the Kampfgeschwader's last large-scale day raids on England. In attempting to defend the bombers the German fighters suffered a sharp defeat; thirty Bf 109s were lost, and a number of others crash-landed in France with varying degrees of damage.

For its part, JG 26 had one of its worst days of the Battle, losing four pilots for only seven victory claims. The Geschwader flew three escort missions, all led by Major Galland. On the morning mission the Second Gruppe met No. 229 Squadron over Tonbridge and claimed five Hurricanes without loss. Two Hurricanes were in fact destroyed; the other three were deemed repairable after their forced landings.

An early-afternoon escort was flown without incident, but the Geschwader had problems on the evening mission, an escort for KG 77. South of London the Stabsschwarm attempted to drive the Hurricanes of No. 303 (Polish) Squadron away from the bombers, and Galland's wingman, Hptm. Walter Kienzle, was shot down. He bailed out with serious injuries. Kienzle was new in the Geschwader and was being evaluated by Galland as a potential Gruppenkommandeur. Galland then dove on a lone Hurricane which blew up under his fire, covering his canopy with oil; the RAF pilot bailed out without injuries. Oblt. Horten apparently claimed two Hurricanes in this combat, but only the one downed by Galland was in fact lost. The rest of the Geschwader had no luck at all. The 4th Staffel's Uffz. Horst Perez was injured severely by a No. 92. Sqd. Spitfire and was forced to land his fighter at Eastbourne. Gefr. Helmut Ziemens of the 7th Staffel straggled on the return flight and was killed in an attack by a Spitfire. The 9th Staffel's Fw. Konrad Carl took off late with his wingman, Gefr. Helmut Hornatschek, and never located his Gruppe. The pair flew the mission with another unit. On the return flight they were intercepted by a squadron of Spitfires over Beachy Head. Hornatschek was killed; Carl escaped, but wrecked his aircraft and injured himself while force-landing at Caffiers.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 30 September 1940

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
9/30/40	Maj.	Galland A.	Ge CO	42	Hurricane	S of Guildford	6:05 PM	303 Sqd	yes
9/30/40	Oblt.	Horten	Ge St	6	Hurricane	Guildford		303 Sqd	unk
9/30/40	Oblt.	Horten	Ge St	7	Hurricane	Guildford		303 Sqd	unk

9/30/40	Uffz.	Schieffer	5	1	Hurricane	Tonbridge	10:25 AM	229 Sqd	yes
9/30/40	Obfw.	Meyer W.	5	6	Hurricane	Tonbridge	10:26 AM	229 Sqd	yes
9/30/40	Uffz.	Dahmer	6	9	Hurricane	Tonbridge	10:25 AM	229 Sqd	yes
9/30/40	Oblt.	Schneider W.	6 CO	9	Hurricane	Tonbridge	10:25 AM	229 Sqd	yes

JG 26 Casualties: 30 September 1940

Date	Rank	Name	Cas	Unit	Aircraft	WNr	Mkgs	Place	Time	Cause
9/30/40	Hptm.	Kienzle, Walter	POW	Ge St	Bf 109E-4/N5818			Rochester/ N of Chapel	6:05 PM	Hurricane
9/30/40	Uffz.	Perez, Horst	POW	4	Bf 109E-4/N1190	wh 4		Eastbourne	6:30 PM	Spitfire
9/30/40	Gefr.	Ziemens, Helmuth	KIA	7	Bf 109E-4	3645		Channel/ London	6:00 PM	Spitfire
9/30/40	Gefr.	Hornatschek, Helmuth	KIA	9	Bf 109E-1	4820		Thames Estuary/ Canterbury	6:00 PM	Spitfire
9/30/40	Fw.	Carl, Konrad	WIA	9	Bf 109E-4	3891		S of London	6:30 PM	Spitfire

1 October

After the defeat of Göring's medium bombers and Stukas and the indefinite postponement of Seelöwe, the battle entered a new stage. Fighter Command was to be extended and exhausted defending against fighter-bomber raids by day, while the Kampfgeschwader destroyed England's cities and civilian morale by night. Major Galland led a Geschwader escort mission for Jabos bombing London. On the return flight over Brighton the Second Gruppe was attacked from above by a lone Hurricane from No. 303 (Polish) Squadron. Uffz. Hans Bluder was hit and remained in his aircraft as it dove vertically to the ground. The Gruppe claimed two Hurricanes, but none was in fact lost.

Oblt. Micky Sprick was awarded the Knight's Cross on this date for his twentieth victory, which had been gained on the 28th.

2 October

The Geschwader, which had been showing definite signs of exhaustion, was awarded an official rest day, while Jafü 2's other fighter units spent a busy day escorting Jabos in attacks on London and Biggin Hill.

4 October

Rain clouds covered England on the 3rd and 4th, and no missions were flown. Hptm. Erich Bode left the Geschwader, and was replaced as Kommandeur of the Second Gruppe by Hptm. Walter Adolph, a Spanish Civil War veteran who transferred in from III/JG 27.

5 October

Improved weather permitted an increase in aerial activity by Jafü 2, and a number of heavily escorted Jabo missions were flown. JG 26, however, continued its stand down. Gefr. Otto-Günther Müller was killed on a training flight when the wing of his Messerschmitt broke off during a dive.

7 October

After another day of training, JG 26 returned to the battle. Major Galland led three Geschwader escorts for Jabos attacking London. The morning mission downed a No. 603 Sqd. Spitfire over Tenterden; the evening mission claimed a single Hurricane, location unknown.

8 October

London was the main target for Jabo attacks, which penetrated the defenses by flying at altitudes of up to 32,000 feet. According to his logbook, Major Galland led a Geschwader escort in the morning and claimed a Spitfire south of Eastchurch. He was the only Geschwader member to score.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 1-8 October 1940

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
10/1/40	Fw.	Koch	5	2	Hurricane	Brighton	3:30 PM	303 Sqd	yes
10/1/40	Oblt.	Schneider W.	6 CO	10	Hurricane	Horsham	3:35 PM	303 Sqd	unk
10/7/40	Fw.	Roth	4	7	Spitfire	Tenterden	11:20 AM	603 Sqd	yes
10/7/40	Fw.	Gärtner	8	6	Hurricane	unknown	5:35 PM		yes
10/8/40	Maj.	Galland A.	Ge CO	43	Spitfire	S of Eastchurch	10:20 AM	66 Sqd	unk

9 October

Heavy rain squalls limited the Geschwader's combat flights to a few intercepts of RAF raids on Calais harbor. On one of these Uffz. Hans-Jürgen Fröhlich was hit by a Blenheim gunner northwest of Calais. He survived his crash-landing on the beach at Sangatte; his aircraft was burned out.

JG 26 Casualties: 1-9 October 1940

Date	Rank	Name	Cas	Unit	Aircraft	WNr	Mkgs	Place	Time	Cause
10/1/40	Uffz.	Bluder, Hans	KIA	4	Bf 109E-1	1180		Balmer Down/	3:30 PM	Hurricane
10/5/40	Gefr.	Müller, Otto-Günther	KIFA	5	Bf 109E-4	5384		Marquise-West		Hurricane wing failed
10/9/40	Uffz.	Fröhlich, Hans-Jürgen	WIA	2	Bf 109E-1	6264		NW of Calais		Blenheim

10 October

By now the Geschwader's three Jabostaffeln, the 3rd, 4th, and 9th, were fully operational in their new role. Major Galland led their escort in two raids on London. The original Jabo units made their attacks from bomber formations, but Galland mixed his Jabostaffeln in with the pure fighter Staffeln to further confuse the defenses. The Jabos were nearly invulnerable to interception, and losses in the three Staffeln were very light. Galland's post-war comments that these missions "ruined the morale of the German fighter pilot" may be an overstatement. Once the bombs were dropped the fighters were absolved of their escort responsibility and were as free to roam as on any freie Jagd, limited only by their fuel state. The Geschwader's effectiveness remained high during this period; any reduction in the pilots' morale could probably be attributed to simple exhaustion.

11 October

Jafü 2's Jabos flew 115 sorties. Their bombs caused numerous civilian casualties in Ashford, Canterbury, and Folkestone. Major Galland led three Geschwader escort missions; only the last found the enemy. Galland claimed a Hurricane and a Spitfire, and Hptm. Adolph, the new Second Gruppe Kommandeur, claimed two Spitfires, all near the Kent coast.

15 October

There is no evidence for the Geschwader's activities between the 12th and the



The order to darken the sides of the Messerschmitts was interpreted differently by the units. The ground crew of this 4th Staffel Bf 109E-4 took the easy route, and smeared on some RLM 02 gray paint with a brush – Marquise, Autumn 1940. (*Dölling via Petrick*)

14th, during which Jafü 2's Jabos maintained the pressure on Fighter Command. Major Galland led three escort missions on the 15th. The Jabos, drawn this day from JG 2, JG 3, JG 26, JG 51, JG 52, JG 54, and LG 2, caused significant disruption to London's railroad system. The Geschwader claimed one Spitfire on the morning mission. During the afternoon the First and Second Gruppen encountered a number of Hurricanes east of London and downed four without loss, while Major Galland and the 8th Staffel's Oblt. Sprick each claimed a Spitfire.

16 October

Fog grounded the Geschwader. Fw. Robert Menge transferred into the 3rd Staffel from 5/JG 77. He had scored about a dozen victories over Norway since April, and had been the Luftwaffe's most successful fighter pilot in that theater.

17 October

Major Galland led two Geschwader escort missions. Oblt. Müncheberg claimed a Bloch 151 south of Faversham; the true identity of this aircraft is unknown.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 11–17 October 1940

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
10/11/40	Maj.	Galland A.	Ge CO	45	Spitfire	SE of Chatham/ Ashford	5:00 PM	421 Flt	unk
10/11/40	Maj.	Galland A.	Ge CO	44	Hurricane	Dartford/ Rochester	5:12 PM	253 Sqd	yes
10/11/40	Hptm.	Adolph	II CO	10	Spitfire	Maidstone	5:38 PM	41 Sqd	yes

10/11/40	Hptm.	Adolph	II CO	11	Spitfire	Maidstone	5:38 PM	41 Sqd	yes
10/15/40	Maj.	Galland A.	Ge CO	46	Spitfire	S of Rochester/ Gillingham	1:50 PM		yes
10/15/40	Uffz.	Scheidt	1	2	Spitfire	Maidstone	11:25 AM	92 Sqd	yes
10/15/40	Uffz.	Scheidt	1	3	Hurricane	S of Gillingham		46+501 Sqd	unk
10/15/40	Oblt.	Henrici	1 CO	6	Hurricane	S of Gillingham	1:55 PM	46+501 Sqd	yes
10/15/40	Hptm.	Adolph	II CO	12	Hurricane	London	2:10 PM	46+501 Sqd	yes
10/15/40	Oblt.	Grawatsch	II St	2	Hurricane	London	2:12 PM	46+501 Sqd	yes
10/15/40	Oblt.	Sprick	8 CO	21	Spitfire	unknown	1:45 PM		yes
10/17/40	Oblt.	Müncheberg	7 CO	21	Bloch 151	S of Faversham	2:55 PM		yes

22 October

The missions of the Geschwader in the period 18–21 October are not known. Jafü 2's Jabo flights continued when weather permitted. Fog restricted activities on the 22nd until the afternoon, when Major Galland led the Geschwader in a "lone attack" on London, according to his logbook. On the return flight a No. 257 Sqd. Hurricane picked off Fw. Heinrich Arp, a 2nd Staffel wingman. Arp's aircraft broke up in the air and scattered pieces along the coast southeast of Dungeness.

25 October

After two days concerning which the record is silent the Geschwader resumed its escort task. Major Galland led three Geschwader escorts to London. Today the Geschwader was ordered to escort the "professional" Jabos of II/LG 2 rather than its own Jabostaffeln. On the return from the morning mission the Second and Third Gruppen attacked No. 603 Sqd. Spitfires over Maidstone and shot down three. The 5th Staffel's Oblt. Kurt Eichstädt was flying high cover and was hit from above by a Spitfire, probably from No. 66 Sqd. Eichstädt's aircraft broke up in the air; he was thrown clear, but his chute failed to open. While returning from the second mission the Third Gruppe was set upon by two dozen Spitfires from Nos. 92 and 603 Squadrons. Lt. Müncheberg forced one of the RAF fighters to crash-land, but Lt. Hermann Ripke was killed, and Obfw. Josef Gärtner bailed out and was taken prisoner. The day's last mission was uneventful.

26 October

Major Galland led an escort for the 3rd Staffel in an attack on London. Galland scored the unit's only victory, shooting down a Hurricane over Maidstone on the return flight.

27 October

Major Galland led the escort for the Geschwader's own Jabostaffeln in an attack on a night fighter airfield on the Thames Estuary. No claims were filed.

29 October

The weather was bad for most of the 28th, and there is no evidence that the Geschwader made any combat flights. On the 29th Major Galland led the Geschwader in two escort missions. The morning mission targeted the London area. The 7th Staffel was credited with strafing and destroying a train near Dungeness. The evening mission targeted a specific Fighter Command airfield, North Weald. No. 257 Squadron was in the process of taking off when the two dozen bomb-carrying Messerschmitts appeared. According to Galland's logbook

these were from the Geschwader's own Jabostaffeln, but it is known that they were in fact from II/LG 2. Converted fighter units such as the JG 26 Jabostaffeln were capable of level bombing only; these aircraft executed a skillful dive-bombing attack that killed nineteen people and injured forty-two. One Hurricane was caught by a bomb blast shortly after take-off, flipped over, and crashed, killing its pilot. The few Hurricanes to get airborne were at a great disadvantage. One was seriously damaged by a Messerschmitt. A second was shot down by Hptm. Schöpfel from 3,000 feet; its pilot succeeded in bailing out. The Germans' return trip found the Hurricanes and Spitfires waiting, however. Three II/LG 2 Jabos were shot down, as was the Messerschmitt of the 8th Staffel's Obfw. Konrad Jäckel, who was taken prisoner.

30 October

In the morning Major Galland led a Geschwader escort for Jabos attacking London. Over Kent the Third Gruppe was hit by Nos. 41 and 222 Squadrons, and a Spitfire pilot from the former squadron struck the Messerschmitt of Uffz. Kurt Töpfer with a burst of fire that exploded it in mid-air. In the subsequent dogfights only Galland scored, shooting down a Spitfire over London. An 8th Staffel aircraft crashed in the Channel on the return. Its pilot was rescued without injury. In mid-afternoon Major Galland was permitted to lead a freie Jagd over Kent. The Geschwader again encountered No. 41 Squadron's Spitfires. This time the battle went entirely in the Germans' favor. Major Galland shot down two Spitfires, and the Geschwader suffered no losses.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 25-30 October 1940

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
10/25/40	Hptm.	Adolph	II CO	13	Spitfire	Maidstone	11:04 AM	603 Sqd	yes
10/25/40	Lt.	Borris	4	6	Spitfire	Maidstone	11:04 AM	603 Sqd	yes
10/25/40	Oblt.	Westphal	7	5	Spitfire	S of Sevenoaks/ Maidstone	11:10 AM	603 Sqd	yes
10/25/40	Oblt.	Müncheberg	7 CO	22	Spitfire	Marden	2:40 PM	92 Sqd	yes
10/26/40	Maj.	Galland A.	Ge CO	47	Hurricane	Maidstone/S of London	5:30 PM		yes
10/29/40	Hptm.	Schöpfel	III CO	21	Hurricane	unknown	5:45 PM	257 Sqd	yes
10/30/40	Maj.	Galland A.	Ge CO	48	Spitfire	E of London	12:55 PM	222 Sqd	yes
10/30/40	Maj.	Galland A.	Ge CO	49	Spitfire	S of Eastchurch/ Maidstone	5:30 PM	41 Sqd	yes
10/30/40	Maj.	Galland A.	Ge CO	50	Spitfire	Canterbury/ Maidstone	5:40 PM	41 Sqd	yes

JG 26 Casualties: 22-30 October 1940

Date	Rank	Name	Cas	Unit	Aircraft	WNr	Mkgs	Place	Time	Cause
10/22/40	Fw.	Arp, Heinrich	KIA	2	Bf 109E-4	1124	bk 10	S Littlestone/ Channel	5:30 PM	Hurricane
10/25/40	Oblt.	Eichstädt, Kurt	KIA	5	Bf 109E-4	3724	bk 12	Church St Farm, Sussex	10:50 AM	Spitfire
10/25/40	Lt.	Ripke, Hermann	KIA	8	Bf 109E-4	3795	bk 2	Sevenoaks, Kent	2:40 PM	Spitfire
10/25/40	Obfw.	Gärtner, Josef	POW	8	Bf 109E-4	5815	bk 7	Yalding, Kent	2:30 PM	Spitfire
10/29/40	Obfw.	Jäckel, Konrad	POW	8	Bf 109E-4	3794	bk 1	Tillingham, Essex	6:15 PM	Hurricane
10/30/40	Uffz.	Töpfer, Kurt	KIA	7	Bf 109E-4	5242	wh 8	Marden, Kent	1:00 PM	Spitfire

1 November

After a day of constant rain that kept the Luftwaffe grounded Major Galland led the Geschwader in a midday escort for Jabos bombing London. On the return flight there was an engagement with Spitfires at high altitude; Galland and two other pilots filed claims for victories in the Ashford-Maidstone area. Two 74 Sqd. Spitfires were shot down in this vicinity, while the third was badly damaged. They were almost certainly the victims of JG 26, although there is confusion in the British records as to the time of their loss.

The Stukas now returned to battle for the first time since 18 August. In the afternoon JG 26 was ordered to escort a Gruppe of Ju 87s in an attack on a British convoy off the Nore. The fighters held off an attack by Spitfires, who were able to down only one Stuka. Oblt. Ebersberger and Hptm. Schöpfel claimed Spitfires over Herne Bay; one of these No. 92 Sqd. aircraft was in fact downed, while the other was able to make it back to Biggin Hill. The Spitfire pilots claimed two Bf 109s in addition to the Stuka, but all of the Geschwader's aircraft returned to France. One 1st Staffel Messerschmitt crash-landed at Audembert with battle damage.

Oblt. von Holtey's Ergänzungsstaffel suffered its first fatality on this date. Uffz. Otto Schmidt was killed when his Messerschmitt crashed on a routine formation training flight from St. Omer.

5 November

The Geschwader remained on the ground for three days before returning to combat with two missions over England. Major Galland was apparently on leave, and did not take part. Analysis of the day's activities is complicated by conflicts among the British sources concerning the times, but apparently both missions were intercepted by two or three squadrons of No. 12 Group's Duxford "big wing", at this time comprising No. 19, No. 242, and No. 310 (Czech) Squadrons. On the midday mission the 6th Staffel pulled off a perfect bounce of No. 310 Sqd. and claimed four Hurricanes. The Czechs in fact lost five aircraft destroyed or crash-landed in what the survivors called their "black day"; none of them was able to fire a shot in reply. The afternoon mission cost the Geschwader its first two Jabo losses, the 9th Staffel Kapitän Oblt. Heinz Ebeling and his wingman, Fw. Walter Braun. Ironically, they were not lost to the British defenses; they collided with one another over Dungeness. Both survived their crash-landings and were taken prisoner. Lt. Erhardt Scheidt of the escort was shot down over Kent and also taken prisoner; this claim was shared by a Spitfire pilot of No. 19 Sqd. and a Hurricane pilot of No. 242 Sqd. These two RAF squadrons each lost a plane and pilot to JG 26.

Oblt. Ebeling was awarded the Knight's Cross on this same day for "eighteen aerial victories, numerous ground attacks, and the successful and rapid conversion of the 9th Staffel to the fighter-bomber role". For this day at least, III/JG 26 could claim to be the most-decorated Gruppe in the Jagdwaffe – its Kommandeur and all three Staffelkapitäne had now received the Knight's Cross. Ebeling's replacement as Kapitän of the 9th Staffel was Oblt. Kurt Ruppert, who transferred into the Third Gruppe from the 3rd Staffel.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 1-5 November 1940

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
11/1/40	Maj.	Galland A.	Gc CO	51	Spitfire	W Ashford	12:50 PM	74 Sqd	yes
11/1/40	Lt.	Heinemann H.	1	1	Spitfire	Ashford	12:50 PM	74 Sqd	yes
11/1/40	Hptm.	Adolph	II CO	14	Spitfire	Maidstone	12:50 PM	74 Sqd	yes
11/1/40	Oblt.	Ebersberger	4 CO	6	Spitfire	Herne Bay	3:35 PM	92 Sqd	yes
11/1/40	Hptm.	Schöpfel	III CO	22	Spitfire	Herne Bay	3:35 PM	92 Sqd	yes
11/5/40	Hptm.	Pingel	I CO	17	Spitfire	E of Gravesend		19 Sqd	unk
11/5/40	Hptm.	Seifert	3 CO	7	Hurricane	Thames Estuary	5:15 PM	242 Sqd	yes
11/5/40	Obfw.	Gottlob	6	4	Hurricane	Ramsgate	12:25 PM	310 Sqd	yes
11/5/40	Fw.	Petersen	6	1	Hurricane	Ramsgate	12:25 PM	310 Sqd	unk
11/5/40	Oblt.	Schneider W.	6 CO	11	Hurricane	Canterbury	12:40 PM	310 Sqd	yes
11/5/40	Obfw.	Meyer W.	6	7	Hurricane	Canterbury	12:40 PM	310 Sqd	yes

JG 26 Casualties: 1-5 November 1940

Date	Rank	Name	Cas	Unit	Aircraft	WNr	Mkgs	Place	Time	Cause
11/1/40	Uffz.	Schmidt, Otto	KIFA	1/E	Bf 109E-1	3659		St Omer/Calais		crashed
11/5/40	Lt.	Scheidt, Erhardt	POW	1	Bf 109E-1	1374	wh 12	Birchington, Kent	5:45 PM	Spitfire
11/5/40	Fw.	Braun, Walter	POW	9	Bf 109E-1/B	3259	yl 11	Dungeness/Wittersham	3:00 PM	collision
11/5/40	Oblt.	Ebeling, Heinz	POW	9 CO	Bf 109E-4/B	3740	yl 3	Dungeness/Wittersham	3:00 PM	collision

6 November

It is doubtful if JG 26 participated in the day's lone fighter sweep. As the campaign season wound down, the fighter and Zerstörer units of Luftflotten 2 and 3 began returning to Germany; ZG 26 and JG 27 had already left France.

7 November

The Luftwaffe's major day mission was a heavily-escorted Ju 87 attack on shipping in the Thames Estuary. JG 26's escort kept the intercepting Hurricanes away from the Stuka formation, which lost no aircraft. No. 249 Squadron claimed the confirmed or probable destruction of seven Messerschmitts, but the only German loss was the Third Staffel's Obfw. Wilhelm Müller. Müller's ten victories ranked him second in the First Gruppe to Hptm. Pingel, who was a recent addition to the unit. Müller was the only member of the Gruppe to have been awarded an Ehrenpokal, or honor cup. After his aircraft was hit in the radiator, Müller was ordered by Oblt. Seifert to crash-land in England. Instead, he tried to make it across the Channel, and disappeared without a trace.

8 November

JG 26 aircraft participated in two sweeps and one Ju 87 escort. The Second Gruppe probably did most of the Geschwader's flying, and took the honors for the day, claiming victories on each mission. Fighter Command's strength had increased greatly in the past month, and now opposed every fighter sweep. On the morning mission the 4th Staffel's Obfw. Willi Roth led his Schwarm in a bounce of No. 615 Sqd., and Roth shot down the formation's "weaver" or trailer, always the most vulnerable location in the unwieldy RAF fighter formations. The Geschwader's second mission was another sweep across Kent. This time they were opposed by two Hurricane squadrons, Nos. 501 and 302 (Polish). The Second Gruppe, led by its new Kommandeur Hptm. Walter Adolph, claimed four "Spitfires"; in reality, two Hurricanes were shot down and two

force-landed. In return a No. 501 Sqd. pilot winged the Messerschmitt of Fw. Ortwin Petersen, who wiped out his aircraft when crash-landing it on a French beach. The next mission was a detached escort for Ju 87s attacking shipping in the Thames Estuary. The Second Gruppe engaged the first RAF fighters to approach, from No. 603 Sqd., and shot down one Spitfire. The close escort, I/JG 51, took on the next two RAF squadrons in the area, allowing No. 17 Sqd. an uncontested run at the Stukas. The Hurricane pilots claimed 15-6-2 of the dive bombers; three Ju 87s were in fact lost. III/JG 26 also formed part of the escort, but details of its mission are unknown.

Oblfw. Max Martin joined the 8th Staffel from instructor duty at Herzogenaurath. Martin was an experienced combat pilot who had claimed one victory while flying twenty-nine combat missions in 3/ZG 26.

10 November

Unserviceable airfields grounded the Geschwader on the 9th. The autumn rains had destroyed the usefulness of the fields on the coast at Calais, and it was decided to relocate to somewhat higher ground inland. The Third Gruppe began moving to Abbeville-Drucat, a large base on the Somme Estuary that had recently been vacated by ZG 26.

11 November

Adolf Galland returned to combat on this date, now with the rank of Oberstleutnant, and led two uneventful Jabo escorts. He flew the first mission in a new Bf 109E-7 rather than his own Bf 109E-4/N. The Bf 109E-7 had fittings for a 300-liter (79-gallon) drop tank or a 250 kg (551 lb) bomb. Possibly of decisive importance had they been available for long-range escort service in August, the new model's capabilities were wasted in November, spreading meaningless bombs over southern England.

13 November

After another day on the ground the Geschwader escorted a raid on London by its own Jabos. No. 249 Squadron was able to avoid the escorts and attack the 3rd Staffel Jabos while they were still inbound over Kent. The Staffel immediately jettisoned its bombs and turned into the attack, damaging two Hurricanes without loss. The Hurricanes were claimed as destroyed, but the claims were apparently never confirmed.

Hptm. Walter Adolph was awarded the Knight's Cross on this date. He had not yet reached twenty victories, and the award was undoubtedly based in part on his success in boosting the combat performance of the Second Gruppe since his arrival. Hptm. Pingel had earlier accomplished the same task in the First Gruppe.

14 November

Obstlt. Galland led two missions. The first, a Jabo escort to London, was uneventful. On the afternoon mission, aircraft of JG 26 and III/JG 51 escorted StG 1 Ju 87s in an attack on shipping off Dover. Five RAF squadrons succeeded in overwhelming the escort and getting at the Stukas. They claimed 16-4-5 Ju 87s and 2-1-2 Bf 109s; the true German loss was two Ju 87s. The JG 26 escort busied itself with the first two RAF squadrons to arrive and claimed three Spitfires; one was in fact destroyed, and the other two damaged.



First Gruppe mechanics work on a Gruppentab Bf 109E-4 in the mud of Audembert in mid-November. (*Museum für Verkehr und Technik*)

JG 26 Victory Claims: 8–14 November 1940

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
11/8/40	Hptm.	Adolph	II CO	15	Spitfire	Tonbridge	2:50 PM	302+501 Sqd	yes
11/8/40	Obfw.	Roth	4	9	Spitfire	Tonbridge	11:35 AM	615 Sqd	unk
11/8/40	Obfw.	Hoffmann H.	4	5	Spitfire	Tonbridge	2:50 PM	302+501 Sqd	yes
11/8/40	Obfw.	Roth	4	8	Spitfire	Dover	2:50 PM	302+501 Sqd	yes
11/8/40	Fw.	Philipp	4	7	Spitfire	Tonbridge	5:40 PM	603 Sqd	yes
11/13/40	Obfw.	Schiffbauer	3	2	Hurricane	S of Folkestone	12:00 PM	249 Sqd	unk
11/13/40	Hptm.	Seifert	3 CO	8	Hurricane	S of Folkestone	12:00 PM	249 Sqd	unk
11/14/40	Obstlt.	Galland A.	Ge CO	52	Spitfire	10km S of Dover	3:28 PM	66+74 Sqd	yes
11/14/40	Oblt.	Müncheberg	7 CO	23	Spitfire	SE of Dover	3:32 PM	66+74 Sqd	unk
11/14/40	Oblt.	Ruppert K.	9 CO	6	Spitfire	S of Dover	3:23 PM	66+74 Sqd	yes

15 November

Obstlt. Galland led the escort for the Geschwader's own Jabos in an attack on London. No. 605 Squadron's Hurricanes had been scrambled from Croydon in good time, gained the altitude advantage, and dove on the German formation at 20,000 feet as it turned for its return flight over Essex. A II/JG 54 pilot was killed in the attack, and two 3rd Staffel Jabo pilots, Lt. Otto Jaros and Lt. Robert Schiffbauer, were shot down and taken prisoner. Galland claimed a Hurricane, but apparently all of the RAF aircraft reached base safely after this successful interception.

Two Ergänzungsstaffel Messerschmitts collided while on a patrol off Dunkirk. Both pilots bailed out into the Channel; Fhr. Heinz Richter drowned, while Oblt. Hans Otto was rescued.

16 November

Obstlt. Galland again escorted the Geschwader's Jabos to targets in southern



These 3rd Staffel groundcrews are momentarily distracted, forcing the Unteroffizier pilot to climb off of "yellow 6" by himself. This was probably the regular airplane of Lt. Robert Schiffbauer, who was shot down in "yellow 2" and taken prisoner on 15 November. (*Museum für Verkehr und Technik*)

England. The mission was ineffective owing to poor weather, and is noteworthy only because it was Galland's 150th combat mission of the war. The Third Gruppe's freie Jagd failed to contact the RAF.

17 November

The entire Geschwader escorted the Bf 110 Jabos of EprGr 210 in a raid on Martlesham Heath. The Hurricanes of Nos. 17 and 257 Squadrons made an effective coordinated interception. No. 17 Squadron waded into the Jabo formation. Obstlt. Galland shot down one of its Hurricanes, whose pilot bailed out uninjured, but the others succeeded in shooting down three Bf 110s. No. 257 Squadron took on the escorting Bf 109s, and claimed two shot down and one probable, while losing one pilot killed and one injured, both from Galland's guns. One JG 26 aircraft was shot down into the sea, killing Oblt. Eberhard Henrici, Kapitän of the 1st Staffel.

19 November

After being grounded for a day owing to the bad weather, Obstlt. Galland led a freie Jagd across Kent. No contact was made with the RAF.

Oblt. Josef "Pips" Priller arrived in the Geschwader from JG 51 to take command of the 1st Staffel. Priller had been awarded the Knight's Cross in October, and the transfer of this highly successful pilot to JG 26 is clear evidence of Galland's clout with the RLM in Berlin.

27 November

After the Channel fog and mists kept the Geschwader on the ground for a full week, the Third Gruppe was able to put up some aircraft from Abbeville on



The 3rd Staffel prepares to take off from Audembert on a Jabo mission. The groundcrews are still scurrying about with the bomb trailers – mid-November. (*Museum für Verkehr und Technik*)



A close view of the bustling 3rd Staffel flight line. Note that “yellow 5” has had the emblem and identification number of its previous unit painted over; also note the peeling yellow paint and white stripe on the rudder of W.Nr. 1815 in the foreground. (*Museum für Verkehr und Technik*)

the morning of the 27th to sweep the English coast. They were foolishly attacked by a lone Spitfire from No. 421 Flight, a unit set up by Fighter Command to patrol the coast and shadow German formations. Oblt. Sprick shot down the Spitfire, whose pilot bailed out with severe wounds.



Obstlt. Galland taxis out for a mission in his Bf 109E-4/N, W.Nr. 5819 – Audembert, mid-November. (*Museum für Verkehr und Technik*)



First Gruppe Kommandeur Hptm. Rolf Pingel taxis his Bf 109E-4 out of its Audembert revetment for a mid-November mission. (*Museum für Verkehr und Technik*)

In mid-afternoon Obstlt. Galland led a freie Jagd in support of an attack on London by I/JG 51's Jabostaffel. Close escort was provided by I/JG 51's two fighter Staffeln. Three Spitfire squadrons avoided Galland's sweep and attacked the JG 51 formation over Kent. Three Jabos and three escorts went down, for



Obstlt. Galland runs up his engine in preparation for take-off. A 2nd Staffel aircraft is ready to follow him – Audembert, mid-November. (*Museum für Verkehr und Technik*)

the loss of a single Spitfire. According to his logbook, Galland shot down a Spitfire in the general area of this combat, but his claim was apparently not filed.

28 November

Improved weather brought more German sweeps over Kent and some as far as London. Obstlt. Galland led one in the morning that apparently led to no results. During a second freie Jagd in the afternoon Galland led his Stabschwarm in a bounce of No. 249 Sqd. from out of the sun. The Hurricane squadron, which was climbing to attack another formation, lost its trailing aircraft to Galland. Several First Gruppe Messerschmitts attempted an attack on the rear of No. 19 Squadron, with different results. The leading Spitfires turned into the attack and broke it up. The Bf 109s were pursued to the Channel, where Fw. Wolfgang Kaminsky disappeared. Another Gruppe aircraft was piloted by Uffz. Heinz Wolf to a good forced landing in Sussex; a third crash-landed on the Belgian coast.

JG 26 Casualties: 15–28 November 1940

Date	Rank	Name	Cas	Unit	Aircraft	WNr	Mkgs	Place	Time	Cause
11/15/40	Lt.	Jaros, Otto	POW	3	Bf 109E-1/B	6353	yl 9	Horndon, Essex	2:33 PM	Hurricane
11/15/40	Lt.	Schiffbauer, Robert	POW	3	Bf 109E-4/B	1250	yl 2	Eastchurch a/f	2:35 PM	Hurricane
11/15/40	Fhr.	Richter, Heinz	KIFA	1/E	Bf 109E-4	1150	bk 4	Channel off Dunkirk		collision
11/15/40	Oblt.	Otto, Hans	WIFA	1/E	Bf 109E-7	1442	bk 13	Grand Fort Philippe		collision
11/17/40	Oblt.	Henrici, Eberhard	KIA	1 CO	Bf 109E-7	5967		20km E of Harwich	10:16 AM	Hurricane
11/28/40	Fw.	Kaminsky, Wolfgang	KIA	1	Bf 109E-4	3755	bk 13	10km NE of Dungeness	5:10 PM	Spitfire
11/28/40	Uffz.	Wolf, Heinz	POW	2	Bf 109E-4	1289	rd 2	Udimore, Sussex	5:00 PM	Spitfire



A Bf 109E-4 of the First Gruppe Stab takes off from Audembert in mid-November. Its spinner is painted with blue and white stripes, characteristic of this unit; the yellow cowl and rudder are the standard theater markings. (*Museum für Verkehr und Technik*)



Hptm. Pingel returns from a mission. The flags represent the countries over which he had fought; from left: Great Britain, France, Belgium, Poland, and Spain – Audembert, mid-November. (*Museum für Verkehr und Technik*)

29 November

The Second Gruppe swept the English coast in the early afternoon, spotted two No. 249 Sqd. aircraft that had been detached from their formation to check out a set of contrails over Dover, and shot one of the Hurricanes down. Somewhat later Obstlt. Galland led a raid on Kent that he identified in his logbook as a “Störungsangriff” or harassing attack, the first time this mission description appears in his records. Obfw. Martin’s logbook describes the Third Gruppe

mission as a Bf 109 Jabo escort that was changed to a freie Jagd. Enemy contact was made, but no claims or losses resulted.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 15–29 November 1940

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
11/15/40	Obstlt.	Galland A.	Ge CO	53	Hurricane	near Dover	2:15 PM	605 Sqd	yes
11/17/40	Obstlt.	Galland A.	Ge CO	54	Hurricane	W of Harwich	10:20 AM	17 Sqd	unk
11/17/40	Obstlt.	Galland A.	Ge CO	56	Hurricane	5km E of Detling	10:15 AM	257 Sqd	unk
11/17/40	Obstlt.	Galland A.	Ge CO	55	Hurricane	20km E of "Sunk" lightship	10:20 AM	257 Sqd	yes
11/17/40	Oblt.	Sprick	8 CO	22	Spitfire	E of Harwich	10:22 AM		yes
11/27/40	Oblt.	Sprick	8 CO	23	Spitfire	Deal	9:25 AM	421 Flt	unk
11/27/40	Obstlt.	Galland A.	Ge CO		Spitfire	E of Kenley	5:07 PM	74 Sqd	no
11/28/40	Obstlt.	Galland A.	Ge CO	57	Hurricane	Dartford	3:40 PM	249 Sqd	unk
11/29/40	Fw.	Koch	5	3	Hurricane	Tonbridge	1:50 PM	249 Sqd	yes

5 December

The Geschwader was grounded for several days by bad weather. The skies finally cleared, and at noon Obstlt. Galland led the Second and Third Gruppen in a freie Jagd, while the First Gruppe flew close escort for some II/LG 2 Jabos that had apparently targeted Hawkinge airfield. The Second Gruppe, probably leading the sweep, encountered No. 46 Sqd. Hurricanes over Rochester and downed one. The Third Gruppe claimed two Hurricanes over Hastings, but their opponents cannot be identified. The rest of the formation was met over the coast at Dover by successive waves of Spitfires from Nos. 64, 74, and 92 Squadrons, and a thirty-minute battle ensued. The Jabos were split from their escort and bombed targets of opportunity. No. 64 Sqd. lost Spitfires to Galland and a Second Gruppe pilot, and made no claims. Galland's victory was scored at the time as his 57th, making him the top-scoring pilot in the Luftwaffe. The Geschwader lost Lt. Hans Heinemann, who disappeared over the Channel. Obfw. Robert Menge was badly injured, but returned to base, and a Geschwaderstab aircraft belly-landed at Wissant with combat damage. That was the extent of the German losses. The Spitfire pilots claimed twelve Bf 109s. RAF fighter pilots, despite their combat experience of the past several months, still tended to consider any German fighter evading attack with a split-S maneuver under full boost – its exhausts thus smoking heavily – as "destroyed". Unlike the Luftwaffe, the Royal Air Force lacked a system for verifying victory claims. The squadrons' intelligence officers were the sole judges of the validity of claims, which at this stage of the war did not even have to be witnessed by an independent observer.

Lt. Johannes Schmidt reported to the Geschwader and was assigned to the 3rd Staffel. Schmidt was an experienced combat pilot who had been decorated for his service in Spain.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 5 December 1940

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
12/5/40	Obstlt.	Galland A.	Ge CO	58	Spitfire	Dover-Dungeness	12:30 PM	64 Sqd	unk
12/5/40	Oblt.	Ebersberger	4 CO	7	Hurricane	Rochester	12:20 PM	46 Sqd	yes
12/5/40	Uffz.	Schieffer	5	2	Spitfire	Chatham	12:45 PM	64 Sqd	yes
12/5/40	Lt.	Haiböck	III St	7	Hurricane	W of Hastings	12:15 PM		yes
12/5/40	Fw.	Brügelmann	8	2	Hurricane	W of Hastings			unk



Hptm. Pingel's ground crew push his airplane back into its revetment. The Bf 109E-4 carried many interesting markings: a blue-and-white-striped spinner, an all-yellow cowl and rudder; the row of flags under the canopy sill; and seventeen red victory bars on a mottled blue rudder band, with roundels above the bottom seven. (*Museum für Verkehr und Technik*)



Three groundcrewmen of 8/JG 26, the Adamsonstaffel. Gefr. Gottfried Schmidt is in the center. Note the mechanic's version of the Staffel emblem. (*G. Schmidt*)

JG 26 Casualties: 5 December 1940

Date	Rank	Name	Cas	Unit	Aircraft	WNR	Mkgs	Place	Time	Cause
12/5/40	Lt.	Heinemann, Hans	KIA	1	Bf 109E-7	5968	wh 4	Channel SE Dover	12:15 PM	Spitfire
12/5/40	Obfw.	Menge, Robert	WIA	3	Bf 109E-4	6324		Folkestone	12:15 PM	Spitfire

7 December

By now the only Jagdgeschwader left in France were JG 2, JG 3, and JG 26. JG 26's landing grounds on the coastal plain behind Calais had become so sodden from the incessant rain that the aircraft had to be supported by planks and logs. The rest of the Geschwader now joined the Third Gruppe in the Abbeville region. The Stab and the Second Gruppe moved to Port le Grand, while the First Gruppe occupied Crécy. There was little flying. The Geschwader's ground personnel were able to relax fully for the first time in seven months, and the first men to obtain leave headed homeward.

12 December

The Third Gruppe escorted a few of its own Jabos on a mission to England and was met at the coast by the Hurricanes of Nos. 229 and 615 Squadrons. Fw. Rudolf Lindemann was shot down and was taken prisoner after bailing out over Leeds. A second Messerschmitt ditched in the Somme Estuary near St. Valéry. Jafü 2's report of the mission mentions that a "Curtiss" was destroyed, but apparently no claim was filed.

23 December

On this date Obstlt. Galland flew his last combat flight of the Battle of Britain, and his only one from Abbeville. It proved to be uneventful.

25 December

Adolf Hitler, on a rare visit to a front-line unit, joined the Geschwader at the Abbeville château for Christmas dinner.

27 December

A 9th Staffel Schwarm intercepted a Coastal Command Blenheim making a lone reconnaissance flight along the French coast and lost Gefr. Dietrich Koch to the bomber's gunner. Koch crashed into the Channel west of Le Treport.

9 January 1941

Fighter Command flew its first offensive mission over France in six months. Five squadrons of Spitfires and Hurricanes swept the Calais coast, but did not draw a reaction from the Luftwaffe.

11 January

The RAF's new tactics brought a quick, if muted, response from Jafü 2. A few German fighters were moved back to the coast to provide early warning of Allied incursions. After Obstlt. Galland had personally reconnoitered and approved the small field at Dieppe, the 8th Staffel moved there from Abbeville. For the next month the Staffel would fly coastal patrols from Dieppe; all but a few would be uneventful.



Adolf Hitler celebrated Christmas 1940 with the Geschwader at the Château Bonnance in Abbeville. Here he is seen off by Obstlt. Galland and his men. (*Martin*)

12 January

Fighter Command's offensive gained a new dimension. On this day No. 242 Sqd. flew the first officially-sanctioned Rhubarbs, which were strafing missions by pairs of fighters. Three pairs took off, at two-hour intervals; unfortunately for the British, two Hurricanes did not return. One of them was shot down west of Boulogne by the 8th Staffel's Fw. Helmut Brügelmann.

15 January

Fw. Brügelmann crashed and was killed during a patrol of the Dieppe area. The German casualty report states that his death came after air combat, but no Allied combat report has been located, and the crash was probably non-operational.

22 January

The Polish pilots of No. 303 Squadron flew their first Rhubarbs today. Two Hurricanes strafed the First Gruppe base at Crécy, north of Abbeville, killing one groundcrewman and wounding two others and destroying one Bf 109. The 1st Staffel's Fhr. Graf Friedrich von Uiberacker was wounded and his Messerschmitt destroyed; whether on the ground or in the air is unclear. The Hurricanes escaped unscathed.

Oblt. Joachim Müncheberg's 7th Staffel began leaving the Channel coast for independent duty in the Mediterranean theater. A forty-man detachment selected from the Staffel's ground staff and maintenance crews boarded Ju 52s



Obfw. Max Martin climbs out of the 8th Staffel's "black 2" after a transfer flight to Dieppe in January 1941. Many Third Gruppe Messerschmitts were never repainted, and had pale blue sides from the time of their arrival in France in July 1940 until their departure in February 1941. (*Martin*)



The 1st Staffel's "white 5" in a St. Omer salvage yard. It displays a little-known Staffel emblem, an eagle, which Oblt. Henrici substituted for the original grasshopper. (*van Boxem via Vanoverbeke*)

in Wevelghem and took off for the south. After a brief leave the pilots picked up brand-new Bf 109E-7s in Germany and flew them to Rome.



Oblt. Müncheberg visits Oblt. Baron von Holtey at the JG 26 Ergänzungsgruppe base at Cognac shortly before Müncheberg's departure for Sicily in February. (*Mombeck*)

JG 26 Casualties: 10 December 1940 – 22 January 1941

Date	Rank	Name	Cas	Unit	Aircraft	WNr	Mkgs	Place	Time	Cause
12/10/40	Lt.	Nels, Franz	WIFA	1/E	Bf 109E-7	5611		Hochgraben		
12/12/40	Fw.	Lindemann, Rudolf	POW	7	Bf 109E-4	3708	bk 2	Abbey Farm, Kent	1:10 PM	Hurricane
12/27/40	Gefr.	Koch, Dietrich	KIA	9	Bf 109E-1	4911	yl 6	W of Le Treport	1:45 PM	Blenheim
1/2/41	Fw.	Dietze, Rudolf	KIFA	1/E	Bf 109E-1	3613		Cognac		crashed
1/15/41	Fw.	Brügelmann, Helmut	KIFA	8	Bf 109E-4	3728		E of St Valéry	11:30 AM	crashed
1/22/41	Fhr.	Uiberacker, F. Graf von	WIA	1	Bf 109E-7	4147		Ligescourt		Hurricane

1 February

Uffz. Hugo Dahmer, one of the Second Gruppe's most successful NCO pilots, was transferred to 1/JG 77 in Norway. Dahmer assumed that he had offended one of JG 26's officers, but was never given a reason for the move, and was still bitter about it fifty years later. He won a Knight's Cross with JG 77 during the initial months of the Russian campaign.

3 February

A patrol from the 8th Staffel engaged some Spitfires over Boulogne, without result.

5 February

In January RAF Bomber Command had initiated a small-scale day bombing



A 250 kg concrete practice bomb is loaded on an Ergänzungsgruppe Bf 109E at Cognac. (*Mombeek*)

campaign over the German-occupied coastal regions. Today a dozen Blenheims dropped bombs on JG 3's airfield at St. Omer-Wizernes, causing little damage, and returned to England without interference. III/JG 3's Bf 109s had scrambled in time to reach a position above the escort, which arrived late and in some disarray, and the Messerschmitts executed a successful bounce. Three Hurricanes and three Spitfires were shot down, without loss to the Germans, who returned to St. Omer and resumed packing for their return to Germany. Several II/JG 26 aircraft caught the RAF formation as it withdrew, and Fw. Wilhelm Philipp shot down a Spitfire over the coast at Neufchatel. This was the Schlageter fighters' last engagement during this tour of duty in France. JG 51 ground staff began arriving from Germany to take the unit's place at Abbeville.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 12 January – 5 February 1941

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
1/12/41	Fw.	Brügelmann	8	3	Hurricane	W of Boulogne	3:15 PM	242 Sqd	yes
2/5/41	Fw.	Philipp	4	8	Spitfire	Neufchâtel	2:15 PM		yes

9 February

JG 26 departed for its home bases in the Rhineland. Before returning to duty Galland's pilots were given a paid skiing vacation in the Austrian Alps, while the ground staff received home leave. This was to be the last rest period granted the entire Geschwader for the remainder of the war.

Chapter Six

THE 7TH STAFFEL IN THE MEDITERRANEAN THEATER

February – September 1941

8 December 1940

A small British army advanced across the Egyptian border into Italian-held Libya.

10 December

Their defenses on the Libyan frontier broken, the Italians accepted a German offer of air and land reinforcements. Sicilian airfields were assigned to Fliegerkorps X, at that time based in Norway. The mission of this Luftwaffe force was to be the neutralization of the British air and naval forces based on Malta; these threatened the Axis sea lanes to Libya.

10 January 1941

II/StG 2 Ju 87s carried out the first Luftwaffe attack in the Mediterranean theater, hitting the Royal Navy carrier *Illustrious* and putting it out of action for many months. Fliegerkorps X was now fully operational on Sicily, and on the following day it began its bombing campaign against Malta. The British aerial defense consisted of a single oversized Hurricane squadron, No. 261. The Fliegerkorps' bomber units comprised two Gruppen of Ju 87s, one Gruppe of He 111s, and two Gruppen of Ju 88s, all with experience against shipping targets. The Bf 110s of a Zerstörergruppe, III/ZG 26, provided the escort force. The Italian Air Force units in Libya needed reinforcement also, and most of Fliegerkorps X, including the Bf 110s, were moved to North Africa within a month. A decision was made to add a Staffel of Bf 109s to the Luftwaffe forces remaining in Sicily. JG 26's 7th "Red Heart" Staffel, commanded by the twenty-two-year-old Knight's Cross recipient Oberleutnant Joachim Müncheberg, was chosen for the task.

22 January

A forty-man detachment from the 7th Staffel's ground staff and maintenance crews left Wevelghem for Italy in Ju 52s.

9 February

The 7th Staffel departed Italy for its new base at Gela, Sicily. The ground detachment had been met in Rome by twelve Staffel pilots who had flown brand-new Bf 109E-7s from Germany. Most of the Staffel's pilots were new to the unit – the Staffel had lost thirteen pilots during the battle over Britain – but all



The Staffel pauses in Treviso en route to Rome. Kneeling in front: Macchi MC 200 ground personnel. Beside them, standing, the pilot. Standing behind, 7th Staffel ground personnel. Left to right: unknown, Gefr. Schwenke, (rear) Ogfr. Schmidt, Gefr. Stöckl, unknown, Gefr. Schücker (in glasses), Gefr. Stupp, Ogfr. Eifler, Gefr. Schmidt, 2 more unknown, Gefr. Buchmann. (*Buchmann*)

had mastered the rudiments of their craft before joining JG 26, and Oblt. Müncheberg missed no opportunity to train them in Rotte and Schwarm tactics, the keys to the Jagdwaffe's success.

12 February

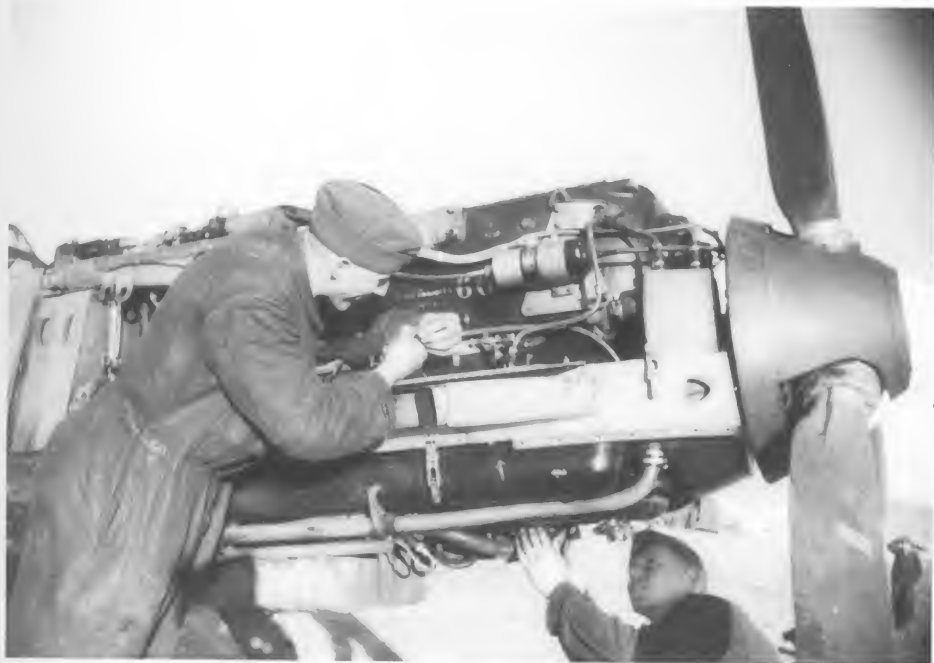
In mid-afternoon the Staffel flew its first sweep across Malta, in support of a reconnaissance mission by three Ju 88s. The Messerschmitts dove on six No. 261 Sqd. Hurricanes as the latter strained to reach the Junkers' altitude, and shot down three; two crashed in the sea, killing one pilot, while the third crash-landed at its Hal Far base with an injured pilot. One surviving RAF pilot claimed to have shot a Bf 109 into the sea, and he was credited with a probable victory, but no German fighter was damaged. A pattern had been set.

7/JG 26 Victory Claims: 12 February 1941

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
2/12/41	Oblt.	Müncheberg	7 CO	24	Hurricane	S Sigguvi, Malta	4:41 PM	261 Sqd	yes
2/12/41	Fw.	Leibing	7	1	Hurricane	Malta	4:45 PM	261 Sqd	yes
2/12/41	Fw.	Leibing	7	2	Hurricane	Malta	4:47 PM	261 Sqd	yes

13 February

The Hurricanes of No. 261 Squadron's A Flight scrambled from Hal Far in time to reach 22,000 feet, well above their normal operating altitude, before the arrival of an Axis bombing raid. Four Bf 109s were seen approaching at the same altitude as the Hurricanes, but the German fighters broke away when their



A DB 601N engine is worked on soon after the unit's arrival in Sicily in February. (*Bundesarchiv-Bildarchiv*)

Schwarmführer saw the British fighters and rapidly pulled away from them. Müncheberg's well-disciplined pilots were under strict orders not to accept battle on the RAF's terms. If they could not begin combat with a height advantage they simply refused battle. The Bf 109E-7 was so much faster than the Hurricane I – in climbing, diving, or level flight – that the Luftwaffe fighters could maintain the initiative under any circumstances, as long as they avoided long turning engagements. Details of the Luftwaffe's command arrangements on Sicily are unknown, but Müncheberg was apparently given wide latitude to employ his small force as he saw fit. The standard mission profile that he developed was similar to the freie Jagden that had been so successful for the Third Gruppe over England the previous summer, and guaranteed a high ratio of victories to losses. Müncheberg's fighters, typically in a strength of one or two Schwärme, took off from Gela, climbed steadily on the short approach flight to Malta until they were well above 20,000 feet, dove on any appropriate targets, zoomed up after a quick attack, and climbed back to safety.

16 February

In the afternoon two Schwärme of the Staffel flew a sweep in support of StG 2's Stukas, which were raiding Luqa airfield. Eight Hurricanes of No. 261 Sqd.'s A Flight, on patrol over Luqa at 20,000 feet, were attacked from above by Müncheberg's Schwarm. One Hurricane dove away, badly damaged by Müncheberg; the rest formed a defensive circle, as previously arranged. The Schwarm led by Oblt. Klaus Mietusch, the Staffel's second in command, then dove on the circle from the opposite direction and split it up in time to be struck once again by Müncheberg's fighters, which had zoomed for altitude after their first attack. Oblt. Müncheberg shot down the British flight leader, F/L J.A.F.

MacLachlan, an eight-victory ace, who bailed out holding his left arm, which had been smashed by a cannon shell. He lost his arm, but flew in combat again back in the UK. Uffz. Georg Mondry badly damaged a Hurricane, and claimed its destruction. The British filed no claims.

Although radar gave the British ample warning of Axis air raids, the fighter defenses on Malta were gaining results far different from those attained over southern England the previous summer. The RAF was hobbled by inferior aircraft, lethargic leadership, and an initial overconfidence resulting from their successes over the Italians. No. 261 Sqd. was up to strength, reporting nineteen serviceable Hurricanes and thirty available pilots on this date, but in just five days the Messerschmitts had shattered the morale of its pilots beyond recovery.

7/JG 26 Victory Claims: 16 February 1941

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
2/16/41	Oblt.	Müncheberg	7 CO	25	Hurricane	off SW coast of Malta	10:38 AM	261 Sqd	yes
2/16/41	Uffz.	Mondry	7	1	Hurricane	10km S of Valetta, Malta @ 5,000m	10:42 AM	261 Sqd	unk
2/16/41	Oblt.	Müncheberg	7 CO	26	Hurricane	E of Ta Venezia, Malta	10:45 AM	261 Sqd	yes

24 February

The Messerschmitts made their next appearance over Malta on this date. A Schwarm dove on a flight of patrolling Hurricanes, which split up in wild disarray and suffered no damage. The leader of No. 261 Squadron was relieved, and left for Egypt to rest.

25 February

A Hurricane on high-altitude patrol over St. Paul's Bay is reported to have suffered engine failure. Oblt. Müncheberg apparently attacked it as it glided to a lower altitude and shot it down. The pilot survived his parachute jump but died in the hospital of an infection.

26 February

The RAF's bomber field at Luqa was subjected to the most damaging raid to date. More than sixty German bombers attacked, destroying six Wellingtons on the ground and leaving the field unserviceable for forty-eight hours. Eight Hurricanes attempting to defend the field shot down one Ju 87 before the Messerschmitts and Italian CR 42s were on them. The 7th Staffel claimed four Hurricanes; the Italians, two. Five Hurricanes, and three pilots, were lost. One of the pilots killed was F/O Eric Taylor, at the time the island's leading scorer. The airfield's anti-aircraft guns were the principal cause of the Axis losses, which totalled three Ju 87s destroyed and two badly damaged.

7/JG 26 Victory Claims: 25-26 February 1941

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
2/25/41	Oblt.	Müncheberg	7 CO	27	Hurricane	E of St Paul's Bay, Malta @ 2,000m	4:45 PM	261 Sqd	yes
2/26/41	Oblt.	Müncheberg	7 CO	28	Hurricane	S of Krendi, Malta	2:06 PM	261 Sqd	yes
2/26/41	Uffz.	Mondry	7	2	Hurricane	Kalafrana Bay, Malta @ 3,000m	2:10 PM	261 Sqd	yes
2/26/41	Oblt.	Müncheberg	7 CO	29	Hurricane	S of Malta	2:10 PM	261 Sqd	yes
2/26/41	Oblt.	Mietusch	7	3	Hurricane	10km S of Malta	2:17 PM	261 Sqd	yes



Oblt. Mietusch returns to Gela after his successful 26 February mission and is greeted with a victory wreath. He is flying "white 2", which he exchanged for "white 13" soon afterward, when Oblt. Müncheberg traded in "white 1" for his well-known "white 12". (Petrick)

28 February

A bombing raid on the fighter field at Hal Far near this date – the records conflict – left the field temporarily out of action. Utilities were cut off; one barracks building was destroyed and two others heavily damaged; and every airplane on the field, including all the Hurricanes, was destroyed or left temporarily unserviceable. The contemporary Malta War Diary states that one Hurricane and pilot were lost in combat, but details have not been traced.

2 March

The number of serviceable Hurricanes was so low that three Fleet Air Arm Fulmars, left on Malta after the departure of the *Illustrious* for repairs, were pressed into service as interceptors. They were caught at low altitude by three Bf 109s and all three were damaged, as was a single Hurricane that was in the area. Oblt. Müncheberg, leading a formation of three fighters, was credited with the destruction of one of these aircraft. It is noteworthy that the German fighters had reverted to their pre-war tactical formation and were now flying in Ketten of three aircraft rather than the usual Schwärme of four. Reducing the number of aircraft on missions helped to maintain the unit's serviceability, and apparently Müncheberg felt that since the Germans always held the tactical initiative he could gamble on dispensing with the Schwarm's fourth set of eyes.

5 March

Hal Far suffered through another bombing raid. Today the Stukas were escorted by some Bf 109s of I/JG 27 that had stopped over on Sicily while en route to Libya and future fame as part of the "Afrika Geschwader". A JG 27 aircraft

shot down one of the first Hurricanes to reach the raiders. 7/JG 26 then arrived and claimed two more Hurricanes before dropping to sea level and strafing the seaplanes and flying boats in St. Paul's Bay. Two Hurricanes were in fact lost. The British air defenses were now in a sorry state. An official British Air Ministry history written in 1944 conceded that the Germans were flying lower and more boldly, winning air superiority for themselves while neutralizing the striking power of the air forces on the island.

7/JG 26 Victory Claims: 2-5 March 1941

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
3/2/41	Oblt.	Müncheberg	7 CO	30	Hurricane	2km W of Marsa Scirocco, Malta	10:45 AM	261 Sqd	yes
3/5/41	Oblt.	Müncheberg	7 CO	31	Hurricane	S of Hal Far, Malta	5:32 PM	261 Sqd	yes
3/5/41	Uffz.	Kestler	7	1	Hurricane	Malta	5:30 PM	261 Sqd	no

7 March

A flight of Hurricanes took off at noon to cover the return of a reconnaissance Maryland to Malta. Two Ketten of Bf 109s shot down one Hurricane and damaged several others before shooting down the Maryland (claimed by Lt. Hans Johannsen as a Blenheim). The Messerschmitts then swept across St. Paul's Bay at low altitude, strafing and badly damaging a Sunderland flying boat.

10 March

Müncheberg's men returned to St. Paul's Bay, where they finished destroying the Sunderland and heavily damaged a second. 7/JG 26 was now the largest Luftwaffe unit based on Sicily. The rest had transferred to North Africa, although bomber units would return to Sicily from time to time to fly a mission against Malta. The island had been given a reprieve, not through the efforts of the British defenders, but owing to the irresolution of the German high command.

15 March

Bombers flying from England to reinforce Egypt and Malta typically crossed occupied France at night and landed on Malta soon after daylight. This morning a small formation of Wellingtons was detected near Sicily by German radar. A few Messerschmitts were scrambled, led by Müncheberg, who pulled up from Gela in a near-vertical climb. Wellingtons had no ventral defenses, as was well-known to the Germans, and Müncheberg thus made his attack from directly beneath the bombers, still in his steep climb. His target immediately burst into flames and fell away. Soon after this interception the RAF withdrew its Wellingtons and Sunderlands to North Africa, temporarily leaving the island impotent as an offensive air base.

7/JG 26 Victory Claims: 7-15 March 1941

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
3/7/41		7. Staffel	7	1	Sunderland	near Malta		228 Sqd	no
3/7/41	Lt.	Johannsen	7	1	Blenheim	W of Gozo Is.	12:15 PM	69 Sqd	yes
3/7/41	Obfw.	Kühdorf	7	1	Hurricane	Malta	12:20 PM	261 Sqd	yes
3/15/41	Oblt.	Müncheberg	7 CO	32	Wellington	10km NW of Gozo Is.	7:50 AM	148 Sqd	yes



The Staffel armorers had to use the facilities at Comiso airfield to adjust or fire the weapons on their aircraft. Here they pause for breakfast after the first work detail. (*Buchmann*)



The right wing cannon is being installed in a 7th Staffel aircraft on the firing stand at Comiso. (*Buchmann*)

16 March

The Staffel's daily sweep resulted in one claim for a destroyed Hurricane. The claim was apparently not confirmed, and it appears that no Hurricane was lost or damaged in combat with Bf 109s.



Actress Carola Höhn, who visited the Staffel at Gela with a theatrical troupe, sees Oberleutnant Müncheberg off on a mission. (*Bundesarchiv-Bildarchiv*)

18 March

No. 261 Squadron received no reinforcements in February, but in March twelve Hurricanes flew over from North Africa. Six arrived on the 18th, led by F/O E. M. "Imshi" Mason, with fifteen claims the top-scoring British ace of the first Libyan campaign.

22 March

The biggest bag by the German fighters came on this day, when seven Hurricanes were claimed. The largest defensive formation in two months, eight Hurricanes, had been sent up against ten Ju 88s and their escort of twelve Bf 109s. Five British pilots were killed in the resulting combat; the Germans suffered no damage or casualties.

28 March

The Red Hearts' scoring for the month was completed when Oblt. Müncheberg returned from his 200th combat sortie claiming his 33rd victory, another Hurricane. Thirteen of the British fighters were claimed by the Staffel in March. The next day the Staffel reported it had ten fighters operational out of fifteen on strength, and ten pilots on strength, all available for duty.

7/JG 26 Victory Claims: 16–28 March 1941

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
3/16/41	Lt.	Johannsen	7		Hurricane	Malta		261 Sqd	no
3/22/41	Oblt.	Mietusch	7	4	Hurricane	40km N of Malta	4:24 PM	261 Sqd	yes
3/22/41	Uffz.	Ehlen	7	1	Hurricane	N of Malta	4:25 PM	261 Sqd	yes

3/22/41	Oblt.	Mietusch	7	5	Hurricane	40km N of Malta	4:26 PM	261 Sqd	yes
3/22/41	Uffz.	Ehlen	7	2	Hurricane	N of Malta	4:27 PM	261 Sqd	yes
3/22/41	Uffz.	Ehlen	7	3	Hurricane	N of Malta	4:30 PM	261 Sqd	yes
3/22/41	Obfw.	Kühdorf	7	2	Hurricane	20km N of Malta @ 2,000m	4:30 PM	261 Sqd	unk
3/22/41	Uffz.	Kestler	7	2	Hurricane	N of Malta	4:31 PM	261 Sqd	yes
3/28/41	Oblt.	Müncheberg	7 CO	33	Hurricane	S of Gozo Is.	5:20 PM	261 Sqd	yes



Uffz. Wagner and Hauptfw. Halbmass, the line chief, await the return of Oblt. Müncheberg from his 200th combat sortie on 28 March. Such landmark missions were always cause for celebration, and brought out the cameras of the amateur photographers. (*Buchmann*)

“Hawker Furies”. He also claimed the destruction of a Breguet XIX reconnaissance aircraft, but the claim was disallowed.

7/JG 26 Victory Claims: 6 April 1941

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
4/6/41	Oblt.	Müncheberg	7 CO		Avia BH33E	Podgorica, Yugoslavia		2nd FS	ground
4/6/41	Oblt.	Müncheberg	7 CO		Bréguet XIX	Podgorica, Yugoslavia			no
4/6/41	Oblt.	Müncheberg	7 CO	34	Avia BH33E	NE of Podgorica, Yugoslavia	12:05 PM	2nd FS	yes
4/6/41	Oblt.	Mietusch	7	6	Avia BH33E	NE of Podgorica, Yugoslavia	12:10 PM	2nd FS	yes

8 April

After waiting for a day in Taranto for further assignments, the Staffell returned



An exhausted Oblt. Mietusch heads for debriefing following a mission, followed by Obfw. Ernst Laube. (Laube via Roba)

to Gela to resume its harassment of Malta, accompanied by the Bf 110s of III/ZG 26 and a single Stuka Gruppe.

11 April

The Red Hearts quickly reasserted themselves over Malta. Today they formed part of a large force of Axis fighters, including MC 200s and CR 42s, that swept over the island in support of a Luftwaffe reconnaissance mission. Eight Hurricanes were scrambled. They had barely reached 10,000 feet when they were hit by the Messerschmitts. Three British pilots crash-landed their damaged fighters; Oblt. Müncheberg claimed one of them. A pair of the new Hurricane IIs reached the reconnaissance plane, a Bf 110, northwest of Malta, and apparently shot it down, but the British pilots were then taken unaware by Müncheberg and Mietusch and were both shot down and killed.

13 April

The Libyan ace F/O “Imshi” Mason was patrolling over Malta with his wingman, who was under orders to weave constantly above and behind Mason – the concept of the “fighting pair” had not yet taken hold in No. 261 Sqd. During one of the wingman’s turns, Mason dove suddenly to attack a Schwarm of Bf 109s down sun. Mason’s target dove away; the other three 109s promptly boxed him in. Mason’s wingman saw none of this. Mason was hit in the hand, and his Hurricane was shot full of holes, but did not burn. He made a successful forced landing off shore; Oblt. Mietusch was credited with shooting him down. Mason spent some time in hospital, left the island, and next saw combat in Iraq.

7/JG 26 Victory Claims: 11–13 April 1941

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
4/11/41	Oblt.	Müncheberg	7 CO	35	Hurricane	SE of Malta	11:31 AM	261 Sqd	yes
4/11/41	Oblt.	Mietusch	7	7	Hurricane	20km N of Malta	11:50 AM	261 Sqd	yes
4/11/41	Oblt.	Müncheberg	7 CO	36	Hurricane	SE of St Paul’s Bay, Malta	11:53 AM	261 Sqd	yes
4/13/41	Oblt.	Mietusch	7	8	Hurricane	4km NE of Kalafrana, Malta	10:34 AM	261 Sqd	yes

22 April

The British ULTRA code-breaking organization picked up one of its first radio messages from the new German theater of operations on this date – a simple notice that 7/JG 26, operating from Gela, was to act as escort for a Luftwaffe operation against Malta. The information did not profit the defenders, who lost



Open house at Gela. The Fascist youth organization "Ballila Youth" is taking the tour; the girls show an interest in the unit "Spassvogel" (joke-bird), Uffz. Mondry. (*Buchmann*)

one of a pair of Hurricanes southeast of Malta to Uffz. Wagner during an unobserved attack from above.

23 April

Oblt. Müncheberg led the Staffel in an escort mission for a photo-reconnaissance aircraft and shot a Hurricane into the sea southeast of Hal Far. Its pilot survived his parachute jump but drowned, as no rescue attempt was mounted. The ASR boats were under orders not to put to sea during actual or expected air attacks; this ancillary result of 7/JG 26's effect on the minds of Malta's command staff was yet another blow to the morale of No. 261 Squadron.

27 April

Twenty-three Hurricanes were flown to Malta from the *Ark Royal*. The first flight of seven was led to Malta by a Sunderland. Oblt. Müncheberg was leading his Kette in a sweep high above the island and saw the Sunderland approach its anchorage, the first of the large flying boats to be spotted in some time. Müncheberg quickly dove to wave-top height, followed by his men. Just as the Sunderland's crew made fast to the mooring buoy, the Messerschmitts streaked across the bay in trail, each firing in turn. A single pass was sufficient; before the British light flak could find the range the German fighters made their exit, leaving the Sunderland a mass of flaming wreckage on the water.

29 April

The Staffel escorted a formation of Ju 88s to Malta in late afternoon and encountered Hurricanes over St. Paul's Bay. Oblt. Müncheberg and Obfw. Ernst Laube each claimed one fighter, and both pilots were seen to bail out. The Hurricanes in turn were able to down one of the Junkers bombers.

30 April

Italian SM 79s attacked Valetta, escorted by MC 200s. Part of 7/JG 26 flew a sweep in support. Lt. Johannsen claimed a Hurricane, but details of this loss are unavailable.

1 May

Müncheberg's 39th and 40th victories came on this day, within two minutes of one another. He was leading a single Kette on an early-morning freie Jagd when he spotted eight Hurricanes flying off the northern coast of Malta. He led his Kette into the sun and dove onto the second flight of four, which had not seen him. His first target dove away trailing only a thin plume of smoke; his second broke into bright flames. His wingman Lt. Johannsen shot large chunks from the third Hurricane, while the fourth tried to get on Johannsen's tail, but was forced by Müncheberg to break off. When this Hurricane out-turned Müncheberg and approached a firing position, the German pilot dove away. He then saw a Hurricane that was apparently preparing to land, and shot it down in flames. Two of the three Hurricanes claimed in this combat were, in fact, shot down; both pilots survived with injuries.

The Staffel flew a second mission in late afternoon in support of a raid by SM 79s. Six Hurricanes were encountered over Hal Far airfield and as many as three were shot down. Obfw. Karl Kühndorf's claim is not listed by most sources, and if submitted was probably rejected. The RAF losses in this combat are unknown, but the Malta War Diary stated that six Hurricanes were lost between 28 April and 1 May. The Staffel submitted eight or nine claims for this period; four are known to have been confirmed.

7/JG 26 Victory Claims: 27 April – 1 May 1941

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
4/27/41		7. Staffel	7	2	Sunderland	Kalafrana Bay, Malta		228 Sqd	
4/29/41	Obfw.	Laube	7	1	Hurricane	St. Paul's Bay, Malta @ 4,000m	6:46 PM	261 Sqd	unk
4/29/41	Oblt.	Müncheberg	7 CO	38	Hurricane	St. Paul's Bay, Malta	6:47 PM	261 Sqd	yes
4/30/41	Lt.	Johannsen	7	2	Hurricane	Valetta, Malta		261 Sqd	unk
5/1/41	Oblt.	Müncheberg	7 CO	39	Hurricane	SE of St. Paul's Bay, Malta	7:53 AM	261 Sqd	yes
5/1/41	Lt.	Johannsen	7	3	Hurricane	W of Valetta, Malta	7:54 AM	261 Sqd	unk
5/1/41	Oblt.	Müncheberg	7 CO	40	Hurricane	SW of Ta Venezia, Malta	7:55 AM	261 Sqd	unk
5/1/41	Lt.	Johannsen	7	4	Hurricane	SW of Luqa a/f, Malta @ 1,500m	5:14 PM	261 Sqd	yes
5/1/41	Oblt.	Müncheberg	7 CO	41	Hurricane	SW of Luqa a/f, Malta @ 100m	5:15 PM	261 Sqd	yes
5/1/41	Obfw.	Kühndorf	7		Hurricane	Luqa a/f, Malta	5:20 PM	261 Sqd	no

5 May

A number of Luftwaffe units paused briefly on Sicily en route to Germany from the successful Balkan campaign. The lone Bf 109 unit among them was III/JG 27, which arrived in Gela on this date to share a few missions with 7/JG 26.

6 May

A raid on Malta was mounted from Sicily by some transient He 111s, escorted by Bf 109s of 7/JG 26 and III/JG 27. The bombers were intercepted by No. 261 Squadron's newly-established C Flight, now flying Hurricane IIs from Hal Far.

One He 111 was badly damaged and crashed on its return to Sicily, but the Hurricanes were punished badly; two pilots bailed out with injuries, and two wounded pilots managed to crash-land their damaged Hurricanes. One Hurricane was claimed by Oblt. Graf von Kageneck, a leading JG 27 pilot, while two were entered in Müncheberg's account.

7 May

Müncheberg's forty air victories brought him the award of the Oak Leaves to the Knight's Cross. On Malta, the leader of No. 261 Sqd. was relieved for "tiredness" and sent back to the United Kingdom to rest.



Group shot of the 7th Staffel's fourteen pilots, taken during one of the unit's transfers. Identifiable are (from legs at left): Uffz. Wagner (2nd), Obfw. Karl Kühndorf (POW April 45) (3rd), Lt. Hans Johannsen (on elbow) (KIA 28 Mar 42) (5th), Obfw. Ernst Laube (6th), Uffz. Karl-Heinz Ehlen (KIFA 29 Apr 42) (8th), Uffz. Georg Mondry (KIA 31 May 43) (12th), Oblt. Klaus Mietusch (KIA 17 Sep 44) (13th), Fw. Leibing (14th). (*Molge*)

10 May

The Staffel's daily sweep resulted in a dogfight with Hurricanes without result, following which one Bf 109 – probably Müncheberg's – dove on a Sunderland moored in Marsaxlokk Bay and set it on fire with a short burst of gunfire. The flying boat, which had been used to ferry essential supplies from Gibraltar, was burned out. The Germans filed no claim for this victory. In any event, ground claims – or in this case, a "water" claim – were not recognized by the Luftwaffe.

11 May

Fliegerkorps X had returned to Sicily in anticipation of a full-scale resumption

of attacks on Malta and Allied shipping. An ULTRA intercept on this date gave the Luftwaffe's strength on Sicily as ninety-nine long-range bombers, twenty-seven reconnaissance bombers, sixty dive bombers, twenty-one Bf 110s, and sixty Bf 109s (7/JG 26 and III/JG 27).

12 May

A second fighter squadron was added to Malta's defenses by the expedient of splitting up No. 261 Squadron. Its C Flight, which contained a nucleus of fresh pilots and most of the island's Hurricane IIs, became No. 185 Squadron, based at Hal Far.

13 May

No. 185 Squadron flew its first mission in the afternoon. Four of its Hurricanes IIs flew high cover for a defensive patrol by No. 261 Squadron. Bf 109s broke up the formation; the flight's leader then saw two fighters approaching, misidentified them as Hurricanes, and was quickly shot down by Oblt. Mietusch, but bailed out successfully. In the meantime a No. 261 Sqd. pilot had been shot down and killed by III/JG 27's Oblt. Graf von Kagenek.

14 May

Again No. 185 Sqd. scrambled four Hurricane IIs as top cover for No. 261 Squadron's Hurricane Is. Today it was III/JG 27's turn to attack the high cover. Oblt. Graf von Kagenek shot down a No. 185 Sqd. aircraft, fatally injuring its pilot.

15 May

Apparently 7/JG 26 was able to take advantage of III/JG 27's temporary presence at Gela by sitting out a few missions, including today's. In an exact repeat of the previous day's engagement, JG 27 aircraft attacked the No. 185 Sqd. high cover for a No. 261 Sqd. patrol and shot down one Hurricane II, killing its pilot. The victim's wingman grounded himself, refusing to fly any more combat missions from Malta – and got away with it.

20 May

Oblt. Graf von Kagenek shot down his fourth Hurricane over Malta on this date; III/JG 27 then left for Germany. In the previous week most of Fliegerkorps X had moved east to support the Wehrmacht's invasion of Crete, which began today. 7/JG 26 was again the only Luftwaffe unit on Sicily.

21 May

No. 249 Squadron flew Hurricane IIs to Malta from the carrier *Ark Royal*, en route to duty in Egypt. Malta's new air commander held them on the ground and persuaded his superiors in Cairo that the Squadron would be more useful on Malta. He had decided that No. 261 Squadron was beyond reclamation, and received permission to disband it. Most of its surviving pilots were transferred away from Malta, to squadrons elsewhere in the Mideast. It passed its battered equipment on to the new arrivals. The pilots of No. 249 Squadron, an experienced Fighter Command unit with an excellent record in the Battle of Britain, were now stuck on the island without their personal gear or ground crews. They were dismayed by the condition of the defenses and by the low morale displayed

by the Malta veterans – one new pilot described No. 261 Squadron as “the most motley crowd of goons you ever saw in your life”.

25 May

It was now the Red Hearts’ turn to leave Sicily. Müncheberg announced his departure from the theater in typical fashion. He led eight of his Messerschmitts in a wide sweep around Malta. After dropping their auxiliary fuel tanks, they dove from ten thousand feet to fifteen, and swept over the island from the south. According to German accounts, this attack from an unexpected direction achieved complete surprise, and they were able to make two passes over Takali, a major fighter airfield, before the British defenses awoke. By then the Messerschmitts were on their way back to Sicily, leaving five of No. 249 Squadron’s Hurricanes ablaze.

7/JG 26 Victory Claims: 6–25 May 1941

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
5/6/41	Oblt.	Müncheberg	7 CO	42	Hurricane	NE of St Paul’s Bay, Malta	12:22 PM	261 Sqd	yes
5/6/41	Oblt.	Müncheberg	7 CO	43	Hurricane	1km SW of Hal Far, Malta @ 600m	12:26 PM	261 Sqd	yes
5/10/41		7. Staffel	7	3	Sunderland	Kalafrana Bay, Malta		10 Sqd RAAF	water
5/13/41	Oblt.	Mietusch	7	9	Hurricane	2km SW of Ta Venezia, Malta	2:00 PM	185 Sqd	yes
5/25/41	Lt.	Johannsen	7		Hurricane	Takali, Malta	3:00 PM	249 Sqd	ground
5/25/41	Obfw.	Laube	7		Hurricane	Takali, Malta	3:00 PM	249 Sqd	ground
5/25/41	Oblt.	Müncheberg	7 CO		Hurricane	Takali, Malta	3:00 PM	249 Sqd	ground
5/25/41	Oblt.	Müncheberg	7 CO		Hurricane	Takali, Malta	3:00 PM	249 Sqd	ground

31 May

The Staffel was now operational on Molaoi, in desolate southern Greece, with six fighters and a small ground detachment. Fliegerkorps X never returned to Sicily; after the Cretan campaign, most of its units flew to Yugoslavia to prepare for the forthcoming invasion of the Soviet Union. The Red Hearts were to provide flank support for the Wehrmacht’s eastward movement. Their specific missions were to defend the Balkans against Allied air attacks and to escort dive bombers searching for shipping in the eastern Mediterranean. Their task required long sea searches in a theater with no ASR service – a real blow to morale, and not considered a suitable reward for their recent services.

14 June

In Libya, Operation Battleaxe began; this was a major British offensive tasked with relieving Tobruk. The Luftwaffe fighter forces in North Africa consisted of the three Bf 109 Staffeln of I/JG 27 and a single Bf 110 Staffel, 8/ZG 26. Oblt. Müncheberg’s detachment was ordered to fly from Molaoi to Libya, where they joined I/JG 27 at Ain-el-Gazala. The JG 27 Gruppenkommandeur, Hptm. Edu Neumann, a prewar JG 26 Staffel Kapitän, treated the new arrivals with “splendid hospitality”, in Müncheberg’s words, and the small force was quickly operational. In an interview Edu Neumann had the following comments about the visitors:

“The 7th Staffel of JG 26 played a ‘guest role’ in Cyrenaica for a short period in mid-1941. At that time my I/JG 27 was the only German fighter unit in



Lt. Theo Lindemann, soon after joining the unit in Libya in June. (*Molge*)

North Africa. Its Kapitän, Oblt. Müncheberg, was allowed to plan and carry out his Staffel's missions without hindrance from me. I believe I am right in saying that the 7th Staffel did not enjoy a lot of success in Africa, since the British advance was halted very quickly. But Müncheberg was an energetic and outstanding leader; he was one of the great figures of the German Luftwaffe."

15 June

Although Müncheberg's was an independent command, his tiny force of six fighters at first flew in mixed formations with the much larger unit, I/JG 27. His pilots were in action on their second day in the theater. Flights of Hurricanes from Nos. 73 and 274 Squadrons engaged Bf 109s near Sidi Barrani at 1700 hours, shooting down two I/JG 27 aircraft for the loss of five Hurricanes. Four were credited to I/JG 27 pilots; the fifth was downed by the 7th Staffel's Fw. Karl-Heinz Ehlen.

16 June

An ULTRA intercept indicated that the 7/JG 26 air echelon was en route to Libya, while the ground staff would be leaving Sicily the following day. In reality the Staffel's remaining men and equipment took a tortuous path to North Africa, most apparently spending some time at the Staffel's former base at Molaoi in the Peloponnesus.

17 June

By noon the Allied offensive in Libya had petered out, and the RAF and South African Air Force (SAAF) fighter units of the Desert Air Force were ordered to cover the retreat. A patrol consisting of seven No. 1 Sqd. (SAAF) Hurricanes

was attacked by Bf 109s southeast of Sidi Omar and lost three aircraft and pilots. Two were downed by I/JG 27; the third, by the 7th Staffel's Oblt. Mietusch, who was flying with JG 27.

The Hurricane pilots of the Desert Air Force were at even more of a disadvantage against the German fighters than were their counterparts on Malta. Their aircraft were all fitted with huge desert air filters, greatly reducing their maximum speed, rate of climb and altitude. (Some Hurricanes on Malta had these; others did not.) Allied air tactics in the theater would have restricted the RAF and SAAF fighters to low altitudes even if their aircraft did not – the British Army insisted on direct fighter cover, which translated into low-altitude patrols in close formation, perfect targets for the experienced German fighter pilots.

18 June

A 7th Staffel Bf 109E-7 crash-landed at Gambut after a combat flight, suffering forty per cent damage. All damaged or destroyed German aircraft were reported daily to Berlin; this is the first appearance of a 7/JG 26 aircraft in the loss records of the Mediterranean theater.

20 June

Oblt. Müncheberg scored his first victory in the new theater, claiming a Hurricane on an early-morning mission east of Buq Buq. The unit of the victim has not been traced.

23 June

ULTRA intercepted the Fliegerführer (FliFü) Afrika strength return. Twenty-six of I/JG 27's Bf 109E-4/Trops were operational out of thirty-five on strength. All six of 7/JG 26's Bf 109E-7s were operational; their lack of tropical equipment was not yet hurting their serviceability.

24 June

The front had stabilized after the failure of the British offensive, and combat flying was restricted to brief forays over the lines and attacks on the Malta and Tobruk convoys. Early on this morning Müncheberg and three of his pilots intercepted a reconnaissance Hurricane of No. 6 Squadron. Müncheberg shot it down, killing the pilot.

25 June

The ULTRA organization reported that 7/JG 26 was returning to Molaoi from Gambut. While the Staffel's return to Greece was certainly contemplated after the failure of Battleaxe, and orders may have been issued, there is no evidence that the move actually took place.

27 June

ULTRA reported that FliFü Afrika had requested the return of 7/JG 26 and some night fighters to counter the Allied escort fighters, and seven of the Staffel's Bf 109s then returned to Africa. This might have taken place as stated, but in all probability these seven aircraft were the ones left in Sicily by Müncheberg during the Staffel's original movement to Greece.



Armorerers are apparently working with a magazine for a MG FF wing cannon. The desert sand is rapidly eroding the airplane's "Red Heart" Staffel emblem – Libya, mid-1941. (*Bundesarchiv-Bildarchiv*)

30 June

The Staffel accompanied eight Ju 87s in an attack on a small coastal convoy. The Stukas were intercepted by No. 1 Sqd. (SAAF), which downed two of them before the Messerschmitts intervened. One of the South African Hurricanes was shot down, killing its pilot, while two others were damaged.

7/JG 26 Victory Claims: 15–30 June 1941

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
6/15/41	Uffz.	Ehlen	7	4	Hurricane	Sidi Barrani, Egypt	4:55 PM	73 Sqd	unk
6/17/41	Oblt.	Mietusch	7	10	Hurricane	SE of Sidi Omar, Libya	10:30 AM	1 Sqd SAAF	yes
6/20/41	Oblt.	Müncheberg	7 CO	44	Hurricane	20km E of BuqBuq, Egypt	7:55 AM		yes
6/24/41	Oblt.	Müncheberg	7 CO	45	Hurricane	Lavyet Ungheila, Libya	8:00 AM	6 Sqd	yes
6/30/41	Uffz.	Mondry	7		Hurricane	Libya		1 Sqd SAAF	no

1 July

The Staffel was by now reunited at Ain-el-Gazala. FliFü Afrika reported that 7/JG 26 had eight fighters operational out of fourteen on strength. There was little activity in the air for the next two weeks; both sides needed to rest and regain their strength after June's heavy fighting.

15 July

A large air battle developed over a convoy of British lighters bound for Tobruk.

Several Ju 87s were shot down. Oblt. Müncheberg shot a Hurricane off the tail of a Bf 110, claiming it as a Tomahawk; the British fighter crashed in flames behind the Allied lines. Two British pilots were killed in this combat, and a third Hurricane was badly damaged. Two of the losses were probably to the Bf 110s of the close escort.

17 July

A 7th Staffel Bf 109E-7 was destroyed in a crash-landing at Derna. It was not on a combat flight; the cause was listed as a maintenance failure. The Staffel's aircraft were starting to wear out.

23 July

ULTRA intercepted an order that 7/JG 26 was to re-equip with Bf 109Fs in Vienna during late August. Müncheberg's correspondence shows that he was very unhappy at the possibility of his Staffel being separated permanently from its parent Geschwader. He undoubtedly used all of his influence – which was considerable for an Oberleutnant – to get this order rescinded.

24 July

FliFü Afrika reported that 7/JG 26 now had seven fighters operational out of thirteen on strength. The decrease of one fighter from the previous report was undoubtedly a result of the crash on the 17th.



A Bf 109E-7 has its 300-gallon auxiliary fuel tank refilled in the Libyan desert. No 7th Staffel emblem can be seen on the plane; either it has worn off completely or the cowling has been repainted or replaced. (*Bundesarchiv-Bildarchiv*)

29 July

Ten Ju 87s attacked a Tobruk convoy, and were in turn hit by eight Tomahawks of No. 2 Sqd. SAAF. The South Africans shot down four Ju 87s before 7th

Staffel Bf 109s could reach them. Two Tomahawks were then shot down; one pilot was killed, and the other survived as a POW. Three more Tomahawks returned to base with severe damage. Staffel pilots reported five victories; of these, Uffz. Wagner's was apparently not filed.

2 August

In late afternoon the full strength of No. 1 Sqd. (SAAF), twelve Hurricanes, patrolled over two British destroyers northwest of Sidi Barrani. Twenty Ju 87s were seen approaching, escorted by twenty Bf 109s. Four Hurricanes attacked the Stukas while the other eight attempted to fend off the German fighters. Four Stukas were shot down at the cost of three fighters. I/JG 27 pilots filed four claims; 7/JG 26's Lt. Johannsen also claimed one of these fighters, calling it a Tomahawk. After the battle a 7th Staffel Messerschmitt crash-landed at Ain-el-Gazala with severe damage.

7/JG 26 Victory Claims: 15 July – 2 August 1941

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	CI #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
7/15/41	Oblt.	Müncheberg	7 CO	46	Tomahawk	SW of Ras el Milh, Libya	6:40 PM	73+229 Sqd	yes
7/29/41	Uffz.	Wagner	7	2	Tomahawk	Libya			no
7/29/41	Fw.	Ehlen	7	5	Tomahawk	50km E of Bardia, Libya @ 100-50m	5:47 PM	2 Sqd SAAF	unk
7/29/41	Oblt.	Müncheberg	7 CO	47	Tomahawk	40km E of Bardia, Libya	5:48 PM	2 Sqd SAAF	yes
7/29/41	Lt.	Johannsen	7	5	Tomahawk	20km S of Sidi Barrani @ 100m	5:50 PM	2 Sqd SAAF	unk
7/29/41	Oblt.	Müncheberg	7 CO	48	Tomahawk	40km E of Bardia, Libya	5:52 PM	2 Sqd SAAF	yes
8/2/41	Lt.	Johannsen	7	6	Tomahawk	NW of Mersa Matruh, Egypt	6:55 PM	1 Sqd SAAF	yes

4 August

FliFü Afrika's strength return showed a further reduction in 7/JG 26's useful strength. It now had only four fighters operational out of eleven on strength.

21 August

Twelve Maryland light bombers of Nos. 12 and 24 Squadrons (SAAF) attacked the airfields around Gambut from the sea, escorted by No. 229 Sqd. Hurricanes. A number of Bf 109s were airborne; some attacked the Hurricanes, which formed a defensive circle, while the others went for the Marylands, driving some back out to sea. Two Marylands were shot down, and at least one more suffered severe damage. Three I/JG 27 pilots claimed Marylands in this combat, as did the 7th Staffel's Lt. Theo Lindemann; Oblt. Klaus Mietusch claimed the probable destruction of yet another.

This was the Staffel's last known combat in Africa. Oblt. Müncheberg's fear that his men would be forced to remain in Africa was not realized. The pilots undoubtedly left their worn-out Bf 109E-7s to rust in the desert and took other forms of air transport back to France. Some of the pilots made the move quickly – Oblt. Müncheberg shot down a Spitfire over northern France on 26 August – but the Staffel remained on FliFü Afrika's establishment for another month.

7/JG 26 Victory Claims: 21 August 1941

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
8/21/41	Oblt.	Mietusch	7		Maryland	Gambut, Libya		12+24 Sqd	prob
8/21/41	Lt.	Lindemann	7	1	Maryland	W of Sidi Barrani, Egypt	5:55 PM	SAAF 12+24 Sqd SAAF	yes

25 August

FliFü Afrika's report to Berlin stated that 7/JG 26 had only two serviceable Bf 109E-7s. It further commented that the DB 601N engines in the Staffel's aircraft gave great trouble in Africa, and were no longer being sent to the theater.

9 September

An ULTRA intercept noted that a detachment was awaiting the arrival of the Staffel in Salonika.

16 September

ULTRA noted that 4/JG 27 had departed for Africa to relieve 7/JG 26.

24 September

The ground crews returned by way of Salonika. On this date a Ju 52 carrying Staffel personnel was attacked over the Mediterranean by three Bristol Beau-fighters. Two men were injured by cannon fire. The transport returned safely to Africa, but both men died there of their wounds. The 7th Staffel's first casualties in the Mediterranean theater were thus suffered at the very end of their detached service. Ironically, the Staffel's only fatalities were these two groundcrewmembers. The pilots had come through the six months' operations without loss.

The 7th Staffel's record while in the Mediterranean theater was unique in the air war. Müncheberg's dozen fighters altered the course of an air campaign, and forced their enemies to modify their strategy for an entire theater of operations. The unit shot down at least fifty-two enemy aircraft without losing a single pilot. Almost half of their victories, twenty-five, were claimed by Müncheberg himself, but the remaining credits were distributed remarkably evenly for a Luftwaffe unit. Twelve of the small group of pilots claimed victories; no more than one or two pilots (still unidentified) returned to France scoreless.

Chapter Seven

THE RETURN TO FRANCE

February – July 1941

28 February

At the expiration of their leaves, the personnel of JG 26 reported to their permanent bases in western Germany. New pilots joined them, fresh from operational training in the JG 26 *Ergänzungsstaffel*. Two men who arrived on this day would have notable careers in the *Geschwader*: Lt. Otto "Stotto" Stammberger, who joined the 9th *Staffel*, and Lt. Paul Galland, Adolf's youngest brother, who joined the 8th. Pilots who completed their training and joined the combat *Gruppen* in March included: First Gruppe: Ofhr. Johann Aistleitner, Lt. Hans Glasmacher, Fw. Heinz Rahardt, Uffz. Friedrich Schneider, Lt. Robert Unzeitig; Second Gruppe: Gefr. Otto Fiedrich, Lt. Ernst Janda, Ofhr. Rudolf Leuschel, Uffz. Willi Mackenstedt, Lt. Werner Michalski, Lt. Heinz Reiche, Fhr. Heinz Schenk (a former Ju 87 gunner), Lt. Horst Sternberg; Third Gruppe: Fw. Gustav Hüttner, Fw. Heinrich Lyhs, and Lt. Erdmann Neumann.

5 March

The JG 26 *Ergänzungsstaffel* at Cognac was expanded to a two-*Staffel* Gruppe. Oberleutnant Hubertus Freiherr von Holtey was named acting Kommandeur.

At about this time a team of thirty mechanics and engineers headed by Oblt. Otto Behrens, the 6th *Staffel* Kapitän, and Lt. Karl Borris, the Second Gruppe technical officer, traveled to the Luftwaffe test center at Rechlin to begin operational testing of the FW 190A-0, the pre-production model of a brand-new fighter from the Focke-Wulf firm. Both men had originally enlisted in the pre-war Luftwaffe as mechanics, and their technical abilities were to be sorely tested in the following months.

Somewhat later in the month the first examples of the latest Messerschmitt fighter, the Bf 109F-2, arrived at Dortmund and Bonn-Hangelar for the First and Third Gruppen. These aircraft were dramatically different in appearance from the Bf 109Es they replaced. Every aspect of the original design had been examined with an eye toward improving aerodynamic efficiency. The new engine intended for the Bf 109F, the Daimler-Benz DB 601E, was not yet ready, and the F-2 retained the DB 601N of the Bf 109E-7. Using the same engine, the new model was superior to the old in maximum speed, rate of turn, initial climb, climb rate at altitude, and diving speed. To save weight the armament of the Bf 109F was reduced from that of the Bf 109E. The wing guns were removed. The Bf 109F-2 had two 7.92mm MG 17 machine guns in the upper

cowling and the excellent new Mauser 15mm MG 151 machine cannon, which was belt-fed and electrically operated, mounted between the engine cylinder banks and firing through the propeller spinner. Its rate of fire was more than double that of the Luftwaffe's older machine cannon, the drum-fed Oerlikon MG FF. The total weight of fire from the F-2 was thus equal to that from the E-4 and E-7, which had two wing-mounted MG FFs and two cowl-mounted MG 17s.

From the evidence of logbooks, casualty reports and photographs, the re-equipment of the Third Gruppe (at this time comprising only the 8th and 9th Staffeln) was almost complete by the time the Geschwader returned to France, while the First Gruppe had received only a few examples of the Bf 109F. Structural weaknesses manifested themselves once the Bf 109F entered combat, and the necessary modifications reduced the rate at which the fighter was released to the combat units. I/JG 26 was forced to fly mixed formations of Bf 109Es and Bf 109Fs until mid-summer.

23 March

The German battle cruisers *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* entered the harbor at Brest after a raiding cruise in the Atlantic. They immediately drew the full attention of the RAF.

26 March

The Geschwader had begun its return to France, where it was to join Luftflotte 3. The original plan was for the Geschwader to occupy fields in the Pas de Calais. It is known that the 3rd Staffel was flying from Dieppe, and the 8th Staffel from Abbeville by this date.

1 April

The Geschwader's mission and base area were changed. Its primary mission would now be to protect the German naval forces berthed in the western ports, especially the battle cruisers now in harbor at Brest. The Geschwader's new airfields were in Brittany. The Stab and the First Gruppe were to base at Brest-Guipavas; the Second Gruppe, Morlaix; and the Third Gruppe, St. Brieuc.

The Geschwader had eighty-nine pilots on strength when it arrived in Brittany. This was only eighty-two per cent of its establishment, but was typical for the Jagdwaffe at this time. The push to rebuild strength after the previous year's losses over England was over, and Uffz. Hans Dirksen was one of only a handful of pilots that the Ergänzungsgruppe sent to the combat Gruppen in April.

4 April

According to his logbook Obstlt. Galland took off from Düsseldorf at 1130 in his Battle of Britain aircraft, W.Nr. 5819, which had been equipped with drop tank fittings and redesignated a Bf 109E-7. After refueling at Le Touquet he and his wingman, Obfw. Robert Menge, took off and headed, not west to Brittany, but north, on a "private excursion over the British Isles". Galland spotted two Spitfires over the English coast and dove on them. The British aircraft, Spitfire IIs from No. 91 Squadron, were climbing through 5,000 feet at the beginning of a routine standing patrol. Both were shot down in a single pass. Galland's victim bailed out with a severe arm injury; Menge's crash-landed his burning Spitfire, which then exploded. Galland and Menge returned to Le Touquet, and finally reached Brest-Guipavas the following afternoon.



At the beginning of April Major Galland's famous Battle of Britain Bf 109E-4/N, W.Nr. 5819, was equipped with drop tank fittings and redesignated a Bf 109E-7. (*Matthiesen via Petrick*)

Obstlt. Galland has just landed at Brest-Guipavas on 5 April after his well-known "transfer flight" has taken him over England. The Bf 109E-7 of his wingman, Lt. Robert Menge, is visible in the background. (*Molge*)

JG 26 Victory Claims: 4 April 1941

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
4/4/41	Obstlt.	Galland A.	Ge CO	59	Spitfire	Dover-Canterbury	5:50 PM	91 Sqd	yes
4/4/41	Obfw.	Menge	3	12	Spitfire	W of Dover	5:50 PM	91 Sqd	yes



Obstlt. Galland poses beside his airplane for the benefit of the photographer. The man on the wing is looking at Galland's unique sighting telescope – Brest-Guipavas, 5 April. (*Molge*)

6 April

Obstlt. Galland took off from Brest at 1245 for a flight identified as a combat mission in his logbook; no further details are given. The 4th Staffel's Obfw. März claimed the destruction of an Anson at 1340 over the northwestern corner of Brittany; this was probably a Beaufort of No. 22 Squadron, caught hunting small German warships at sea.

8 April

A 5th Staffel Schwarm scrambled from Morlaix in early afternoon to intercept No. 82 Sqd. Blenheims that were en route to bomb Brest. The Blenheim's rear gunners hit two of the Messerschmitts with their single .303 in. Brownings. Lt. Horst Reeh crashed into the sea near the Ile de Batz, and was killed; Fw. Karl Schieffer survived a crash-landing without injury. Obfw. Koch was credited with shooting down one of the Blenheims, but all made it safely back to England.

The 8th Staffel's Obfw. Max Martin took off at 1355 on his first mission from Brittany, but failed to contact the enemy. According to his logbook he made twenty-two flights from St. Brieuc in the next two months without once sighting an RAF aircraft. The rest of the Third Gruppe was equally unsuccessful, and scored no victories while based at St. Brieuc; it is not known if its lack of "hunter's luck" was attributable to a poorly located base or to poor ground control.

JG 26 Casualties: 8 April 1941

Date	Rank	Name	Cas	Unit	Aircraft	WNr	Mkgs	Place	Time	Cause
4/8/41	Lt.	Reeh, Horst	KIA	5	Bf 109E-7	2754		N of Morlaix	1:53 PM	Blenheim
4/8/41	Fw.	Schieffer, Karl	no	5	Bf 109E-7	6500		near Brest		Blenheim

9 April

Obstlt. Galland received mission credit for an afternoon flight from Brest, but no details of his combat are available. Obfw. Martin sortied from St. Brieuc at the same time, but was not credited with a combat mission.

10 April

In the morning No. 1 PRU sent a Spitfire to Brest to photograph the battle cruisers. The 2nd Staffel's Lt. Horst Ulenberg shot it down. In the evening another Spitfire was dispatched on the same mission; Lt. Ulenberg shot it down also.

Obfw. Martin made two Alarmstarts (scrambles), with no success. Obstlt. Galland made a flight in late evening for which he received mission credit, but again no details are available.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 8-10 April 1941

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
4/8/41	Obfw.	Koch	5	4	Blenheim	Ile de Batz (NE of Brest)	1:25 PM	82 Sqd	yes
4/10/41	Lt.	Ulenberg	2	6	Spitfire	Plouescat	7:25 PM	1 PRU	yes
4/10/41	Lt.	Ulenberg	2	7	Spitfire	N Ile d'Ouessant (W of Brest)	9:22 AM	1 PRU	yes



Gefr. Werner Bohnenkamp of the 9th Staffel in his new Bf 109F-2 at St. Brieuc in April. JG 26 stopped painting Geschwader and Staffel emblems on its aircraft when it returned to the Pas de Calais in June, probably as a security measure. (*Stammberger*)

15 April

In the morning Obstlt. Galland made his first flight in a Bf 109F, a routine visit to the Third Gruppe at St. Brieuc. According to the photographic evidence this aircraft, W.Nr. 6714, was a pre-production Bf 109F-0, although his logbook states that it was a Bf 109F-2. It was assigned as his personal aircraft. That afternoon he took off for Le Touquet with a load of champagne and lobsters to celebrate the birthday of Genmaj. Theo Osterkamp, the Luftflotte 2 Jagdfliegerführer. Once again Galland took the opportunity to detour over England with his wingman, on this occasion Oblt. Hans-Jürgen Westphal. The pair encountered a lone Spitfire and Galland shot it down with ease. The Spitfire was piloted by a wing commander who had lost the wing he was leading – two squadrons of Spitfires and one of Hurricanes. The wing was on an area familiarization flight, which continued as ordered until Galland spotted the large formation and attacked it from the rear. Two more Spitfires went down, although Galland did not claim the last because he did not see it crash. Westphal missed an easy victory when his guns failed to fire. Galland's landing gear dropped during the combat, which resulted in an RAF pilot claiming his airplane's destruction. Untouched, the Germans applied full throttle and dove for the Channel. Upon reaching Le Touquet, Galland raised his landing gear when he moved the lever to lower it, and was prevented from making a wheels-up landing by the frantically-waving ground crews. This incident did nothing to disturb Galland's outward self-composure as he presented the undamaged birthday gifts to Osterkamp while reporting his latest victories. Unfortunately for the historian, this is the last combat flight in the last of Adolf Galland's surviving logbooks.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 15 April 1941

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
4/15/41	Obstlt.	Galland A.	Ge CO	60	Spitfire	30km W of Dover	5:50 PM	Wittering Wing	yes
4/15/41	Obstlt.	Galland A.	Ge CO	61	Spitfire	Dover-Margate	6:00 PM	266 Sqd	yes
4/15/41	Obstlt.	Galland A.	Ge CO		Spitfire	S England	6:00 PM	266 Sqd	no

17 April

The 3rd Staffel was scrambled from Brest-Guipavas to intercept an attack on the battle cruisers. Uffz. Emil Babenz claimed the destruction of a Beaufort; in reality this was a Blenheim of No. 105 Squadron. A second badly-damaged Blenheim crash-landed in England. A Second Gruppe Bf 109E-7 sustained engine damage in combat and was destroyed in a crash-landing on the Brest-Guipavas airfield.

18 April

The First Gruppe's base immediately north of Brest apparently gave it an advantage over the rest of the Geschwader in intercepting air raids on the harbor. It scored again today, when the 2nd Staffel's Oblt. Martin Rysavy chased a No. 53 Sqd. Blenheim far out to sea and shot it down.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 17-18 April 1941

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
4/17/41	Uffz.	Babenz	3	1	Beaufort	Channel - N of Brest	6:00 PM	105 Sqd	yes
4/18/41	Oblt.	Rysavy	2	3	Blenheim	70km W of Ile de Seine	9:48 AM	53 Sqd	yes

Pilots joining the combat Gruppen from the JG 26 Ergänzungsgruppe and other training units in May included: First Gruppe: Gefr. Karl Dietz, Gefr. Ulrich Grebe, Uffz. Ernst Christof; Second Gruppe: Uffz. Karl Finke, Fw. Franz Schwaiger (ex-mountain infantry); Third Gruppe: Lt. Kurt Kranefeld, Fw. Johann Edmann, Uffz. Gerhard Ömler, and Uffz. Otto Grohmann.

8 May

A Third Gruppe Bf 109F-2 was damaged in a crash-landing at St. Brieuc after one of that Gruppe's fruitless sorties.

Fliegerstabsingenieur Ernst Battmer replaced Oblt. Walter Horten as Geschwader technical officer. Battmer, a civilian, was to hold this post for the rest of the war. Horten joined the Fighter Staff in the RLM in Berlin.

10 May

The 8th Staffel's Uffz. Hermann Melzer was killed when the Bf 109F-2 he was ferrying to the unit crashed on take-off from Warnemünde.

That evening Rudolf Hess, Germany's Deputy Führer, flew a Bf 110 from Augsburg to Scotland in a muddled attempt to secure a negotiated peace with Britain. Obstlt. Galland was amazed to receive a call from Reichsmarschall Göring's office ordering him to intercept and shoot down the "madman" Hess's aircraft. Galland sent up two aircraft, but they failed to make contact in the growing darkness.



Lt. Paul Galland of the Adamsonstaffel, in a new Bf 109F-2 – St. Brieuc, April. (*Molge*)

11 May

A First Gruppe Bf 109E-7 was damaged while taking off from Brest-Guipavas on a combat mission. According to a groundcrewman's private diary, the Gruppe made four Alarmstarts during the day, without result. Part of the Third Gruppe transferred to the island of Guernsey for the day in its search for targets, and had some success. The 8th Staffel's Obfw. Martin had a skirmish with some Spitfires, and was given credit for a combat mission – the only such credit he received while in Brittany.

14 May

One of the Third Gruppe's last remaining Bf 109E-4s was destroyed in an accident while taking off from Vannes airfield for a combat mission.

16 May

The 9th Staffel's Fw. Heinrich Lyhs was killed when his Bf 109F-2 was caught in a crosswind and overturned while landing at St. Brieuc after a fruitless Alarmstart.

JG 26 Casualties: 10–16 May 1941

Date	Rank	Name	Cas	Unit	Aircraft	WNr	Mkgs	Place	Time	Cause
5/10/41	Uffz.	Melzer, Hermann	KIFA	8	Bf 109F-2			W of Warnemünde	8:30 AM	takeoff
5/16/41	Fw.	Lyhs, Heinrich	KIFA	9	Bf 109F-2	8106		St. Brieuc a/f	7:30 PM	landing

17 May

Hptm. Fritz Fromme was named Kommandeur of the JG 26 Ergänzungsgruppe,



A Third Gruppe groundcrewman examines a wrecked 9th Staffel Bf 109F at St. Brieuc. It had flipped over while landing, ripping away the canopy. This was probably the aircraft of Fw. Heinrich Lyhs, who was killed. (*G. Schmidt*)

replacing Oblt. Freiherr von Holtey, who took over the *Ergänzungsgruppe's* 2nd Staffel. Fromme, a World War I fighter pilot, served the *Geschwader* in one capacity or another from 1936 to 1945.

25 May

A No. 1 PRU Spitfire failed to return from a reconnaissance mission over Brest, yet another victim of the 2nd Staffel's Lt. Horst Ulenberg.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 25 May 1941

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
5/25/41	Lt.	Ulenberg	2	8	Spitfire	60km N of Brest	9:01 AM	1 PRU	yes

26 May

Aircraft from the First Gruppe flew one hundred miles out to sea to escort in the battleship *Bismarck*, which was making for Brest after its first foray into the Atlantic. But the ship had been sunk that day by the Royal Navy, and the German pilots were recalled.

27 May

No. 611 Sqd. Spitfires flew a *Rhubarb* to the Second Gruppe's base at Morlaix. Their strafing attack destroyed one Bf 109E-7 and damaged another. The Spitfires then escaped unscathed.

29 May

The *Geschwader* received word that it would be returning to the Channel narrows. A *Vorkommando* consisting of select personnel from the First Gruppe ground crews left for St. Omer.

1 June

JG 26's pilots began flying to their new airfields near the Channel coast. Obstlt. Galland and his Stab returned to Audembert, their base the previous autumn, which was just up the coast from Genmaj. Osterkamp's Jafü 2 operations room at Le Touquet. Galland resumed his previous practice of rotating the Staffeln of his command through Audembert or Le Touquet at roughly two-week intervals. This permitted him to evaluate all of the pilots of the Geschwader in turn. The Staffel at Audembert was designated the Führungsverband, or lead formation. The First Gruppe went to Clairmarais, one of several fields in the St. Omer complex. The Second Gruppe was based at Maldeghem in western Belgium, while the Third Gruppe went to Ligescourt, northeast of Abbeville. None of these airfields had hard-surfaced runways. Their grass landing grounds were usable only in good weather, but would prove adequate for the coming "hunting season".

While the men of JG 26 were settling into their new bases on the Channel coast, the Gruppen of JG 2 "Richthofen", Luftflotte 3's other Jagdgeschwader, shifted westward to cover the Schlagerter Geschwader's previous area of responsibility in western France. In early June Luftflotte 2, along with its fighter units, principally JG 3, JG 51, and JG 53, returned to Germany en route to the Russian frontier. Luftflotte 3 was left with responsibility for the defense of southern and southwestern Germany and all of France and the Low Countries, while continuing the night offensive against the United Kingdom. Its active day fighter units were split between two Jagdfliegerführer: Jafü 2 remained at Le Touquet to control the fighter units along the Channel, while Jafü 3 was responsible for the fighter units in western France.



"Yellow 6", a 9th Staffel Bf 109F-2 at readiness at St. Brieuc. The airplane's original radio codes can be made out through the thin sprayed coating of dark fuselage paint. (*Stammlberger*)

Large formations of British fighters, sometimes accompanying a small number of Blenheim bombers, had begun flying over the French coast almost daily. Their objective was to entice the German fighters to come up and do battle. The Schlager Geschwader's primary mission for the next year and a half would be to defend the military installations and industrial targets in northern France and western Belgium against these short-range incursions.

The British code names for these missions provide a useful means of reference. "Circuses" were basically large-scale fighter sweeps containing a few bombers as bait. These proved to be the type of mission most likely to provoke a response by German fighters when conditions were right for the defenders, and soon evolved into highly elaborate operations. "Ramrods" were rarely flown in 1941; these were escorted bomber missions in which the objective was actually to destroy the target. The Germans saw no difference between the two types of mission, and treated them the same. "Rhubarbs" were small-scale fighter strafing missions, which the defenders only attacked when units already airborne could be positioned to intercept them. "Rodeos" were sweeps by large formations of fighters; these posed no threat to the Germans, and could safely be ignored. Last, "Roadsteads" were attacks on German shipping in convoy or in the Channel ports. Flak ships were usually a sufficient defense against the slow, poorly-armed Blenheims that were the only bombers available for the early missions.

Circus No. 1 had been flown on 10 January 1941. The scale of the British effort was small until mid-year, giving the Germans time to build up an air defense system. By June, a workable system using radar and ground control was in place, similar in concept if not in scale to that defending southern England. Although the British chose the time, course, and strength of their overflights, the true tactical initiative belonged to the Germans. The bombers were incapable of causing real damage – the bomber strength of a typical Circus was six Blenheims, each carrying a mere one thousand pounds of bombs – and the British fighters could be attacked or not, as the immediate situation dictated. The prevalent British fighter in early 1941, the Spitfire II, was inferior to the Bf 109F-2, but the new Spitfire V matched the German fighter in most combat parameters. However, the Germans retained their superiority in the climb, the dive, and the zoom climb from a dive, which meant that they could join and break off combat at will. Spitfires could out-turn any German fighter, but all German pilots knew this, and their rule was "one pass and away". The confident and experienced Schlager pilots were about to begin their most successful period of the war.

2 June

Oblt. Hans-Heinz Dethloff was killed in the crash of his Bf 109E-4 while on an Ergänzungsgroupe training flight from Cognac.

7 June

The First Gruppe's Uffz. Schlichting was injured, and his Bf 109E-7 destroyed, in a crash-landing at Brest-Guipavas. The loss records state that this was after a combat mission, but this was probably intended to be a transfer flight to Clairmarais.

JG 26 Casualties: 2-7 June 1941

Date	Rank	Name	Cas	Unit	Aircraft	WNr	Mkgs	Place	Time	Cause
6/2/41	Oblt.	Dethloff,	KIFA	2/E	Bf 109E-4	932		SW of Cognac a/f	11:00 AM	landing
6/7/41	Uffz.	Hans-Heinz Schlichting	WIFA	2	Bf 109E-7	6509		Brest		engine

9 June

All three Gruppen were involved in combats in their new theater of operations. The 3rd Staffel engaged seven No. 74 Sqd. Spitfires patrolling the Dover Straits, and shot one down. A few minutes later an 8th Staffel Schwarm was attacked by a pair of No. 91 Sqd. Spitfires on a "Jim Crow" or spotting patrol from Hawkinge. Each side claimed a victory, but no aircraft went down; one Messerschmitt sustained damage.

Bomber Command had for some time been sending small formations of unescorted bombers on sweeps of the Dutch and German coasts. The Second Gruppe, flying from its fixed base at Maldegheem and others in eastern Belgium, soon put a stop to this practice. Two No. 18 Sqd. Blenheims were lost from a formation of six flying over Ameland. One was claimed by the 5th Staffel Kapitän, Lt. Wolfgang Kosse; the other by a pilot from JG 52. Four No. 9 Sqd. Wellingtons sweeping the Dutch coast in search of shipping lost half their number, one to flak and the other to the 6th Staffel Kapitän, Oblt. Walter Schneider.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 9 June 1941

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
6/9/41	Obfw.	Menge	3	13	Spitfire	E of Dover	2:10 PM	74 Sqd	yes
6/9/41	Lt.	Kosse	5 CO	7	Blenheim	Channel Narrows	5:10 PM	18 Sqd	yes
6/9/41	Oblt.	Schneider W.	6 CO	12	Wellington	Knokke (BE)	5:45 PM	9 Sqd	yes
6/9/41	Oblt.	Westphal	8	6	Spitfire	Dover	2:12 PM	91 Sqd	yes

11 June

Two flights of No. 258 Sqd. Hurricanes attempted Rhubarbs to the Calais area. Both were intercepted by Schwärme from the 3rd Staffel. One Hurricane was shot down; another crash-landed in England with a wounded pilot.

An afternoon patrol over Calais by No. 609 Sqd. encountered the 4th Staffel. Oblt. Ebersberger badly damaged one Spitfire, whose pilot ignored orders to bail out and flew head-on into the Dover cliffs while attempting to reach Mánston.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 11 June 1941

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
6/11/41	Lt.	Schmidt J.	3	1	Hurricane	mid-Channel	1:25 PM	258 Sqd	yes
6/11/41	Hptm.	Seifert	3 CO	9	Hurricane	mid-Channel	1:30 PM	258 Sqd	yes
6/11/41	Oblt.	Ebersberger	4 CO	8	Spitfire	Nieuport	4:55 PM	609 Sqd	yes

13 June

In the early afternoon Obstlt. Galland led a small formation of Messerschmitts on a sweep of the English coast. He surprised a No. 258 Sqd. flight on a routine

patrol and claimed two of its Hurricanes, but it appears that neither claim was confirmed. One Hurricane was in fact downed; it crash-landed at Hawkinge.

14 June

Circus No. 12, an early-morning attack on St. Omer-Ft. Rouge by ten Blenheims, achieved a measure of surprise. No. 92 Squadron attacked the 3rd Staffel as it was climbing from Audembert and shot down two Messerschmitts. S/L Jamie Rankin's victim was the newly-commissioned Lt. Robert Menge, one of the First Gruppe's best pilots. A 1st Staffel Schwarm got up from Clairmarais, but one of its Messerschmitts was shot down into the Channel by a No. 603 Sqd. Spitfire on a Rhubarb; the German pilot was rescued without injury.

In the meantime the 9th Staffel was able to penetrate the close escort and shoot down two No. 110 Sqd. Blenheims, although only one claim has been located. Apparently one Third Gruppe aircraft belly-landed after this combat.



The Bf 109E-7 of the 3rd Staffel's Lt. Robert Menge. Note the row of flags beneath the cockpit; these represented the European nations Menge had helped to conquer. Menge was killed by No. 92 Sqd. Spitfires on 14 June. (*Molge*)

JG 26 Victory Claims: 13–14 June 1941

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
6/13/41	Obstlt.	Galland A.	Ge CO	62	Hurricane	5km W of Dover	1:15 PM	601 Sqd	unk
6/13/41	Obstlt.	Galland A.	Ge CO	63	Hurricane	10km NE of Ashford	1:18 PM	601 Sqd	unk
6/14/41	Uffz.	Ömler	9	1	Blenheim	NW of Calais	7:25 AM	110 Sqd	yes

JG 26 Casualties: 14 June 1941

Date	Rank	Name	Cas	Unit	Aircraft	WNr	Mkgs	Place	Time	Cause
6/14/41	Lt.	Menge, Robert	KIA	3	Bf 109E-7	6490		S of Marquise		Spitfire
6/14/41	Lt.	Schrader, Karl	WIA	3	Bf 109E-7	3758		Marquise-Audembert		Spitfire
6/14/41	Oblt.	Kahse	no	1	Bf 109E-7	4105	wh 5	Channel	8:30 AM	Spitfire

16 June

In the afternoon Hptm. Rolf Pingel's First Gruppe scored heavily against Circus

No. 13. Coastal Command provided six Blenheims for a raid on Boulogne; six No. 11 Group fighter squadrons made up the escort. Their only opposition was the First Gruppe and Obstlt. Galland's Stabsschwarm and Führungsverband. The latter comprised Oblt. Gustav "Micky" Sprick's 8th Staffel, which scrambled from Le Touquet. The interception was made in good time, but the Spitfires of the high escort were able to keep the fighting well above the bombers. Over the target the bombers dove to avoid the flak, destroying their formation's integrity. Galland and the 8th Staffel dove on the now strung-out close escort, downing two Hurricanes, while Pingel and Oblt. Josef "Pips" Priller's 1st Staffel broke through to the bombers, shooting down two and badly damaging a third. As the mass of battling aircraft made their way back out to sea Nos. 74 and 92 Squadrons arrived from a diversionary sweep of Le Touquet. The Spitfire pilots claimed a number of Bf 109s. No British fighters went down at this time, but the leaders of both of these famous Fighter Command squadrons were forced to crash-land their badly damaged aircraft on the English coast.

The next battles were between the escorts for ASR aircraft that both sides sent over the Channel in the immediate aftermath of the fighting. The First Gruppe and the 8th Staffel flew searches for their own pilots and escorts for He 59s, while Nos. 1 and 91 Squadrons provided the escort for a Lysander. A 2nd Staffel escort force fended off attacks by a number of RAF fighters south of Dungeness, shooting down two, but lost their He 59, which was downed by No. 1 Sqd. Hurricanes.

During the earlier battles with the Spitfires the First Gruppe lost three Bf 109E-7s: Gefr. Karl Dietz was killed on his first combat mission; a second pilot bailed out over the Channel and was rescued uninjured; while the third crash-landed at Audembert with sixty per cent damage, equivalent to a write-off. The 8th Staffel's Lt. Gustav Hüttner was shot down by a Spitfire and killed.

The RAF's Non-Stop Offensive – soon dubbed the "nonsense offensive" by German propagandists – had begun. The German opposition to Circus No. 13 was the strongest and most effective yet seen, promising the RAF the war of attrition that its commanders wanted. This had been the most strenuous day of combat for the Schlager pilots since the Battle of Britain. The Germans claimed two Blenheims and thirteen fighters; the RAF lost the two Blenheims and six fighters, while another three fighters were seriously damaged. The RLM ultimately confirmed eleven claims, in exact agreement with the RAF losses in destroyed and damaged aircraft. No. 11 Group claimed eleven Bf 109s destroyed, five probably destroyed, and four damaged (abbreviated as 11-5-4 claims), while actual German losses were the four aircraft mentioned.

The ability of JG 26 to penetrate the escort would lead to larger and larger British formations. A Circus ultimately required up to twenty squadrons of fighters, some 240 aircraft, to protect a dozen or so Blenheims. The fighters were deployed as follows. First across the target were three Target Support Wings, each of three Spitfire squadrons. One paralleled the path of the bombers, overtaking them en route. The other two approached from different directions, crossing in the vicinity of the target. They then split up into flights of four, which had finally replaced sections of three in most (but not all) Fighter Command squadrons, and patrolled the target area until their fuel state forced them to return. The Escort Wing contained four squadrons of Spitfires or Hurricanes. Their functions can be inferred from their titles – Close Escort,

Medium Escort, High Escort, and Low Escort Squadron. The obsolescent Hurricanes were replaced by Spitfires over the course of the year. Above the Escort Wing was the Escort Cover Wing of three squadrons, while coming along behind to mop up were the Forward Support Wing and the Rear Support Wing, each of two squadrons. The deployment of this armada required great skill by the British ground controllers and airborne wing commanders. Timing was critical because of the British fighters' short endurance, which limited them to targets no farther inland than Lille. Cloudless conditions were essential at the assembly point over southern England; thus Circus were rarely attempted other than in the spring and summer months.

The German defenders did not attempt to confront these massive formations directly. JG 26 entered combat in Staffel or Gruppe strength, rather than as a Geschwader. The German battle plan never changed – their fighters were to get off the ground quickly, gain height, and make use of sun and cloud to attack any part of the enemy “beehive” that appeared vulnerable. Genmaj. Osterkamp and his two Kommodoren, Galland and Hptm. Wilhelm Balthasar of JG 2, understood that their role was to inflict maximum damage on the RAF while preserving their own limited forces. It was not required or expected that the bombers be attacked by every German intercept formation. Only the most skilled formation leaders, such as Galland himself, could judge the proper moment at which the escort could be penetrated at minimum risk in order to reach the bombers. The British fighters were even less of a threat to the Germans than the bombers. For German morale and propaganda purposes it was essential that every reasonable opportunity be taken to inflict harm on the RAF, but fairly strict guidelines had to be met. According to Fighter Command's combat reports, Luftwaffe fighter formations large and small “avoided combat” on most RAF missions, to the frustration (or relief) of the Allied pilots – but the well-disciplined German pilots were just following orders.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 16 June 1941

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
6/16/41	Obstlt.	Galland A.	Ge CO	64	Hurricane	W of Boulogne	4:35 PM	258 Sqd	unk
6/16/41	Hptm.	Pingel	1 CO	18	Blenheim	SE of Boulogne	4:35 PM	59 Sqd	yes
6/16/41	Hptm.	Pingel	1 CO	19	Spitfire	S of Dungeness	4:52 PM	74+92 Sqd	yes
6/16/41	Oblt.	Priller	1 CO	21	Spitfire	W of Boulogne	4:35 PM		yes
6/16/41	Lt.	Unzeitig	1	1	Spitfire	NW of Boulogne	4:37 PM		yes
6/16/41	Uffz.	Held	1	1	Buffalo	SW of Boulogne	4:41 PM	601 Sqd	yes
6/16/41	Oblt.	Priller	1 CO	22	Blenheim	SW of Boulogne	4:45 PM	59 Sqd	yes
6/16/41	Oblt.	Gottlob	1	5	Spitfire	S of Dungeness	4:50 PM	74+92 Sqd	yes
6/16/41	Lt.	Ulenberg	2	9	Spitfire	S of Folkestone	5:32 PM	54Sqd	yes
6/16/41	Oblt.	Rysavy	2 CO	4	Spitfire	S of Hythe	6:20 PM	1+91 Sqd	yes
6/16/41	Fw.	Jäckel E.	2	3	Spitfire	SE of Dungeness	6:30 PM	1+91 Sqd	yes
6/16/41	Fw.	Leibold	3	1	Spitfire	W of Boulogne	4:22 PM		yes
6/16/41	Oblt.	Westphal	8	7	Spitfire	Boulogne-Etaples	4:25 PM		unk
6/16/41	Oblt.	Sprick	8 CO	24	Spitfire	Dungeness-Etaples	4:35 PM		unk
6/16/41	Oblt.	Westphal	8	8	Hurricane	40 km W of Boulogne	5:00 PM	258 Sqd	unk

JG 26 Casualties: 16 June 1941

Date	Rank	Name	Cas	Unit	Aircraft	WNr	Mkgs	Place	Time	Cause
6/16/41	Gefr.	Dietz, Karl	KIA	1	Bf 109E-7	3817		Marquise/Samer		Spitfire
6/16/41	Lt.	Hüttner, Gustav	KIA	8	Bf 109F-2	8125		E of Montreuil-Calais	4:30 PM	Spitfire

17 June

The RAF increased the fighter escort for the evening's Circus No. 14 to fourteen squadrons. The bomber force, twenty-three No. 2 Group Blenheims, left the English coast at 1915, headed for the Kuhlmann chemical plant at Chocques, near Béthune. The large size of the attacking force prompted Genmaj. Osterkamp to order the entire Geschwader into the air. The two Staffeln of the Third Gruppe scrambled at 1915 and strained for altitude in their Bf 109Fs. They climbed above the three Spitfire squadrons of the Biggin Hill Wing, which were providing the Circus high cover, and attacked them near Calais. Two Spitfires crashed, and one Messerschmitt dove away to crash-land on Ligescourt. As soon as the top cover Spitfires were engaged the main formation was attacked by Schwärme and Staffeln from the rest of the Geschwader. Flights of Hurricanes from the close escort turned into each attack. They kept the Messerschmitts from the Blenheims, but at a high cost – seven Hurricanes were shot down. One Bf 109 was lost to a Hurricane; the 2nd Staffel's Lt. Bernhard Adam crashed into the Channel. The eight squadrons of the British forward support and target support wings put in their appearance as the bombers turned for home over Boulogne; three of their Spitfires were damaged by the Bf 109s and crash-landed back in England. The German fighters disengaged in the growing dusk and returned to their bases. The Schlageter pilots claimed the destruction of sixteen fighters. The true loss to the RAF was twelve; the excess claims were for the Hurricanes of the close escort, which had been attacked by every airborne German unit. Fighter Command claimed 15-7-11 Bf 109s; JG 26 lost one fighter and pilot.

Later in the evening the 8th Staffel transferred from Le Touquet to the Third Gruppe's main base at Ligescourt. It apparently continued to serve as Galland's Führungsverband for a few more days.

Oblt. Fritz Losigkeit left the Geschwader to join the staff of the military attaché at the German embassy in Tokyo. Oblt. Martin Rysavy succeeded him as 2nd Staffel Kapitän.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 17 June 1941

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
6/17/41	Obstlt.	Galland A.	Ge CO	65	Hurricane	15km W of St. Omer	7:38 PM	56+242 Sqd	yes
6/17/41	Obstlt.	Galland A.	Ge CO	66	Hurricane	5km SE of Boulogne	7:40 PM	56+242 Sqd	yes
6/17/41	Oblt.	Priller	1 CO	23	Hurricane	W of Cap Gris Nez	7:42 PM	56+242 Sqd	yes
6/17/41	Lt.	Aistleitner	1	1	Hurricane	NW of Boulogne	7:47 PM	56+242 Sqd	yes
6/17/41	Oblt.	Eickhoff	2	1	Spitfire	NW of Cap Gris Nez	7:40 PM		yes
6/17/41	Oblt.	Rysavy	2 CO	5	Hurricane	NW of Cap Gris Nez	7:52 PM	56+242 Sqd	yes
6/17/41	Hptm.	Adolph	II CO	16	Hurricane	Boulogne	7:50 PM	56+242 Sqd	yes
6/17/41	Lt.	Janda	4	1	Hurricane	Cap Gris Nez	7:50 PM	56+242 Sqd	yes
6/17/41	Hptm.	Schöpfel	III CO	23	Hurricane	unknown	7:40 PM	56+242 Sqd	yes
6/17/41	Oblt.	Haiböck	III St	8	Spitfire	St. Omer	8:00 PM		unk
6/17/41	Oblt.	Westphal	8	9	Spitfire	N of Etaples	7:40 PM	74 Sqd	yes
6/17/41	Oblt.	Sprick	8 CO	25	Hurricane	unknown	7:42 PM	56+242 Sqd	yes
6/17/41	Obfw.	Martin	8	2	Hurricane	unknown	7:45 PM	56+242 Sqd	yes
6/17/41	Oblt.	Westphal	8	10	Spitfire	unknown	7:45 PM	74 Sqd	yes
6/17/41	Oblt.	Sprick	8 CO	26	Hurricane	unknown	7:58 PM	56+242 Sqd	yes
6/17/41	Lt.	Neumann E.	9	1	Spitfire	unknown	7:52 PM	74 Sqd	yes

JG 26 Casualties: 17 June 1941

Date	Rank	Name	Cas	Unit	Aircraft	WNr	Mkgs	Place	Time	Cause
6/17/41	Fw.	Adam, Bernhard	KIA	2	Bf 109E-7			Channel-Boulogne		Hurricane

18 June

Part of the Richthofen Geschwader was moved back east in response to the RAF's recent concentration on targets around Calais. JG 2's Stab and Second Gruppe transferred from Beaumont-le-Roger to Abbeville-Drucat. III/JG 2 was now at St. Pol-Brias, giving Jafü 2 control of five Jagdgruppen plus the JG 2 and JG 26 Stabsschwärme. I/JG 2 remained at Brest, under Jafü 3. The afternoon's Circus was a raid by six Blenheims on the Bois de Liques, escorted by sixteen fighter squadrons. Genmaj. Osterkamp apparently replaced most of his JG 26 formations with the new arrivals from JG 2, but successes were few. Over Calais Obstlt. Galland and the 8th Staffel bounced the high cover from the rear and downed two of the trailing Spitfires. The British "beehive" stayed together, however, and the Messerschmitts were unable to score again until the formation reached mid-Channel on the return flight, when several Third Gruppe pilots combined to shoot down a lone Spitfire. One First Gruppe Bf 109E-7 force-landed at Sangatte after sustaining battle damage. JG 2 filed no victory claims; its sole loss was one Messerschmitt that force-landed at St. Inglevert with light combat damage. Fighter Command claimed 10-5-0 Bf 109s for the loss of four pilots, and proclaimed the day a great success.

19 June

This day's major RAF raid targeted the docks at Le Havre. Most of the Blenheims aborted, and the target was apparently not hit. The airborne JG 26 patrols were recalled without attacking. In the evening three Blenheims flew a Roadstead to Etaples, escorted by two Spitfire squadrons. Small formations from the First and Third Gruppen apparently made contact. The 9th Staffel claimed one Spitfire, but the claim was not confirmed. A First Gruppe Bf 109E-7 crash-landed at Clairmarais with combat damage, probably from this engagement. The Spitfire squadrons claimed one Messerschmitt, and suffered no losses.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 18-19 June 1941

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
6/18/41	Obstlt.	Galland A.	Ge CO	67	Spitfire	1km E of Ardres	6:18 PM	145 Sqd	yes
6/18/41	Oblt.	Sprick	8 CO	27	Spitfire	unknown	6:20 PM	145 Sqd	yes
6/18/41		III. Gruppe	III	1	Spitfire	NW of Cap Gris Nez	6:35 PM	609 Sqd	unk
6/19/41	Uffz.	Eierstock	9	1	Spitfire	NW of Cap Gris Nez	7:35 PM		no

21 June

Today brought the greatest RAF effort to date: two Circuses, each consisting of six No. 2 Group Blenheims escorted or supported by seventeen squadrons from No. 11 Group. It was a day that Adolf Galland would never forget. At noon the first report of an approaching British formation reached his command post in Audembert. Jafü 2 ordered several Gruppen to intercept. The first Messerschmitts to make contact were those of Galland and his wingman, Fw. Bruno Hegenauer. At 11,000 feet Galland spotted the British formation below him, making for the airfield at St. Omer-Wizernes. He dove through the close escort and attacked the right Blenheim of the rear vic of three. It immediately burst into flames. The bomber crashed near one of the St. Omer airfields at 1232, eight minutes after Galland's take-off.

By now other Messerschmitts had arrived to occupy the close escort. Galland

once more penetrated the screen and attacked a bomber, this one in the lead vic. He believed that it crashed, but his claim was not confirmed. The Blenheim did, in fact, reach England, seriously damaged. Hegenauer had lost his element leader in one of his head-long dives, and Galland was attacked from his unprotected rear by a No. 303 Sqd. Spitfire. Galland escaped his attacker by a quick split-S into a cloud. Trailing coolant, he made a smooth forced landing on Calais-Marck. A half hour later, he was returned to Audembert in a courier aircraft. In the meantime his wingman had been shot down by W/C Kent, the joint commander of the Polish Northolt Wing; Hegenauer bailed out without injury.

Gefr. Christian Knees of the 9th Staffel was shot down and killed at this time. No more RAF aircraft went down over France. The 1st Staffel's Oblt. Priller damaged a No. 603 Sqd. Spitfire whose pilot managed to crash-land on the Goodwin Sands. Aircraft of the Second Gruppe pursued the formation across the Channel. The Biggin Hill Wing met the approaching aircraft in mid-Channel and shot two Second Gruppe Bf 109s into the water. One pilot was rescued by the Germans, while Uffz. Otto Ewald was picked up by the British. Obfw. Franz Lüders was pursued all the way to England and was trapped and shot down over Kent; he was quickly taken prisoner. One Spitfire was damaged by a Second Gruppe pilot in this engagement.

The second British attack of the day was reported at about 1600. Jafü 2 ordered the First Gruppe and one JG 2 Gruppe to intercept, but they did not make contact until the target, the small airfield at Desvres, had already been bombed. Galland took off, this time alone; his wingman Hegenauer had not yet returned to Audembert. While approaching Priller's 1st Staffel southeast of Boulogne, Galland sighted a Spitfire formation below him. A quick attack, and one of the rear Spitfires (from No. 611 Sqd.) dove away in flames. Galland wanted to witness the crash himself, and committed the cardinal sin of fighter pilots – he kept his eyes on his target for too long. Suddenly the right side of his fuselage was ripped open by gunfire; his radiator and fuel tanks were hit and began spewing vapor, and his head and arm were stung by fragments. He had been taken unaware by a No. 145 Sqd. Spitfire. Galland dove away and was gliding for an airfield when his fuel tank blew up. He finally escaped his disintegrating aircraft after the “most terrible seconds” of his life and made a smooth parachute descent. That evening Galland was patched up at the naval hospital in Hardingham. Genmaj. Osterkamp came over from Le Touquet to congratulate him on his survival and on the Geschwader's successes. Then Osterkamp sprang the news that Galland was to be the first recipient of the Wehrmacht's new top decoration for heroism, the Knight's Cross with Oak Leaves and Swords.

The First Gruppe was engaged west of Boulogne by the Biggin Hill Wing, flying as target support, and claimed two Spitfires for the loss of two Bf 109E-7s that crash-landed on Clairmarais. The Third Gruppe was ordered up from Ligescourt at 1620 and encountered the main force near the coast. Only No. 1 Squadron of the close escort was still in formation, and it succeeded in keeping the Messerschmitts from the bombers. Two Hurricanes and three Bf 109Fs went down. Third Gruppe pilots claimed two Spitfires over the Channel before the German fighters were recalled to base. (German fighters were not normally permitted to extend their pursuit to the English side of the Channel – the Second Gruppe's high losses during the day's first mission were attributed to poor control.)

The day's claims by No. 11 Group totalled 26-7-6 Bf 109s for the loss of six fighters and two pilots, and one Blenheim. Four fighters and two Blenheims sustained serious damage. The unprecedented scale of the fighting resulted in German claims well in excess of actual British losses – JG 26 filed fourteen victory claims, of which details are known for twelve, while II/JG 2 filed ten claims. The Germans lost nine Bf 109s destroyed and four damaged. JG 26 lost three pilots killed and two taken prisoner.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 21 June 1941

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
6/21/41	Obstlt.	Galland A.	Ge CO	68	Blenheim	S of St Omer near Lumbres	12:32 PM	21 Sqd	yes
6/21/41	Obstlt.	Galland A.	Ge CO		Blenheim	Merville	12:36 PM	21 Sqd	no
6/21/41	Obstlt.	Galland A.	Ge CO	69	Spitfire	N of Etaples	4:37 PM	616 Sqd	unk
6/21/41	Obt.	Priller	1 CO	24	Spitfire	SW of Ramsgate	12:40 PM	603 Sqd	yes
6/21/41	Fw.	Jäckel E.	2	4	Spitfire	W of Boulogne	4:30 PM		yes
6/21/41	Oblt.	Rysavy	2 CO	6	Spitfire	N of Boulogne	4:31 PM		unk
6/21/41	Oblt.	Mätzke	4	1	Spitfire	N of Ramsgate	1:20 PM	145 Sqd	unk
6/21/41	Obfw.	Martin	8	3	Spitfire	unknown	4:40 PM		yes
6/21/41	Oblt.	Sprick	8 CO	28	Hurricane	unknown	4:42 PM	1 Sqd	yes
6/21/41	Oblt.	Sprick	8 CO	29	Spitfire	unknown	4:55 PM		yes
6/21/41	Uffz.	Eierstock	9	2	Spitfire	unknown	12:50 PM		yes
6/21/41	Lt.	Naumann	9	2	Hurricane	unknown	4:35 PM	1 Sqd	yes

JG 26 Casualties: 21 June 1941

Date	Rank	Name	Cas	Unit	Aircraft	WNr	Mkgs	Place	Time	Cause
6/21/41	Lt.	Gries, Heinz	KIA	8	Bf 109F-2	6732		near Etaples/ Camiers	4:42 PM	Spitfire
6/21/41	Uffz.	Carmienke, Heinz	KIA	8	Bf 109F-2	6733	bk 7	W of Le Touquet	4:40 PM	Hurricane
6/21/41	Gefr.	Knees, Christian	KIA	9	Bf 109F-2			near Desvres	12:30 PM	Spitfire
6/21/41	Uffz.	Otto, Ewald	POW	6	Bf 109E-7	6462	br 13	SE of Ramsgate	2:00 PM	Spitfire
6/21/41	Obfw.	Lüders, Franz	POW	6	Bf 109E-7	6497	br 2	SE of Ramsgate	1:30 PM	Spitfire
6/21/41	Lt.	Geburtig, Hans-Joachim	WIA	8	Bf 109F-2	5521		Samer	4:40 PM	Spitfire
6/21/41	Obstlt.	Galland, Adolf		Ge CO	Bf 109F-2	6713	<-+-	NE Boulogne/ St Omer	4:37 PM	Spitfire
6/21/41	Fw.	Hegenauer, Bruno	no	Ge St	Bf 109F-2			near St Omer	12:40 PM	Spitfire
6/21/41	Obstlt.	Galland, Adolf	no	Ge CO	Bf 109F-2	5776	<-+-	c/l Calais-Marck	12:36 PM	Spitfire

22 June

Germany's invasion of the Soviet Union provided the RAF with a strategic rationale for its daylight offensive – it would reduce the pressure on the Russians by forcing the Luftwaffe to return fighter units to western Europe. As it turned out, this did not happen; the 250 fighters of JG 2 and JG 26 already in France and Belgium proved sufficient. The tactics of both sides would remain unchanged through the summer months.

Upon receiving word of approaching aircraft at 1544 Jafü 2 scrambled all five of its Gruppen to intercept Circus No. 18, an attack on Hazebrouck by six Blenheims. All five formations made contact at about 1600. JG 26 claimed four Spitfires and lost one pilot. JG 2 claimed two Blenheims and five Spitfires, and lost two pilots. A late evening Rodeo was intercepted by the 8th Staffel, without result.

For the day the RAF lost one pilot missing and one injured, while claiming 29-5-7 Bf 109s. Fighter Command's victory claims had lost all touch with reality, a condition that held until the end of 1942. The RAF's claims totals will no longer be mentioned in the present text except for especially egregious individual cases or in summations. JG 26's victory claims for the Channel fighting were generally in close accord with the true RAF losses; unfortunately, the same cannot always be said for JG 2's claims, which greatly complicates the historian's task of resolving those combats in which both Geschwader participated.

23 June

All five of Jafü 2's Gruppen were sent up against the day's first Circus, an attack on the chemical plant at Choques, but successes were few. Apparently only I/ JG 26 made contact. The Gruppe downed two Spitfires. One of its Bf 109E-7s was shot down, and another crash-landed at Hesdin; both pilots were uninjured. Late in the evening Circus No. 20 was dispatched to bomb the airfield at Mardyck. The Blenheims were early and the escort never formed properly. The German reaction forced the Blenheims to bomb early and turn back. Two of their number were downed. The two JG 2 Gruppen claimed five Blenheims before the Germans were set upon by the late-arriving escort. In this battle JG 2 claimed five Spitfires, but lost four pilots and six Bf 109Fs. The Second Gruppe claimed one Spitfire over St. Omer, and the Third Gruppe claimed a Blenheim. The First Gruppe was ordered to mid-Channel to await the returning British formation, and shot down one Spitfire without loss to itself.

Lt. Hans Dippel joined the First Gruppe after completing his operational training in the Ergänzungsgruppe.

24 June

Comines was the target for the evening's Circus. At 1946 hours Jafü 2 reported RAF aircraft six miles north of Gravelines at 8,200 feet. The JG 26 Gruppen began taking off at 2015, and at 2023 were ordered to fly to Gravelines and wait there. British fighters were intercepted over Gravelines at 2040. JG 26 claimed three Spitfires. The 9th Staffel lost Lt. Erdmann Neumann to Spitfires south of Gravelines, and a First Gruppe Messerschmitt crash-landed near Wissant. JG 2 made contact as the British crossed the coast on the way out, and claimed ten Spitfires shot down, for the loss of two pilots. The RAF's true losses were two pilots missing and one injured.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 22-24 June 1941

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
6/22/41	Hptm.	Pingel	I CO	20	Spitfire	W of Dunkirk	4:10 PM	609+611 Sqd	yes
6/22/41	Hptm.	Adolph	II CO	17	Spitfire	Gravelines	4:00 PM	609+611 Sqd	yes
6/22/41	Oblt.	Westphal	8	11	Spitfire	unknown	4:10 PM	609+611 Sqd	yes
6/22/41	Oblt.	Sprick	8 CO	30	Spitfire	unknown	4:20 PM	609+611 Sqd	yes
6/23/41	Oblt.	Priller	I CO	25	Spitfire	S of Somme Estuary	1:35 PM		yes
6/23/41	Oblt.	Gottlob	1	6	Spitfire	NW of Calais	8:50 PM		yes
6/23/41	Hptm.	Seifert	3 CO	10	Spitfire	near Samer	1:50 PM		yes
6/23/41	Oblt.	Ebersberger	4 CO	9	Spitfire	St. Omer	8:40 PM		yes
6/23/41	Hptm.	Schöpfel	III CO	24	Blenheim	N France	8:30 PM	107 Sqd	yes
6/24/41	Obfw.	Roth	4	10	Spitfire	Gravelines	8:55 PM		unk
6/24/41	Obfw.	Meyer W.	6	8	Spitfire	Calais	8:40 PM		yes
6/24/41	Oblt.	Sprick	8 CO	31	Spitfire	unknown	8:58 PM		yes

JG 26 Casualties: 22–24 June 1941

Date	Rank	Name	Cas	Unit	Aircraft	WNR	Mkgs	Place	Time	Cause
6/22/41	Lt.	Glasmacher, Hans	KIA	2	Bf 109E-7	6219		near Clairmarais a/f		Spitfire
6/24/41	Lt.	Neumann, Erdmann	KIA	9	Bf 109F-2			S of Gravelines	8:40 PM	Spitfire

25 June

This was another two-Circus day; each contained aircraft from two squadrons of Blenheims, escorted or supported by sixteen squadrons of fighters. German reaction to the noon attack on the Hazebrouck motor yards was complicated by the need to cover shipping off Cap de Ft. Philippe. At 1248 German patrols were ordered not to make contact with Spitfires in the Gravelines area – too late, since several units were already in combat. Most of the JG 26 formations were unable to put in effective attacks, but the First Gruppe engaged the Tangmere Wing in a prolonged battle over the coast and claimed three Spitfires; all of these apparently crash-landed in England. JG 2 pilots claimed six Spitfires, for the loss of two Bf 109Fs and one pilot. JG 26 lost the 9th Staffel's Fw. Bartholomaeus Eierstock, who was shot down in flames off Dunkirk; three Second Gruppe Bf 109E-7s crash-landed with combat damage. The RAF losses totalled two Spitfires downed and three badly damaged (abbreviated 2-3 losses).

Jafü 2's reaction to the afternoon Circus to St. Omer-Wizernes also showed signs of indecision. At 1630 formations of Blenheims were reported over Boulogne and southwest of Desvres, with reinforcements – obviously the support wings – waiting in mid-Channel. The airborne patrols from JG 2 and JG 26 made quick attacks on the "beehive" as it withdrew from St. Omer to the coast, but by 1646 hours Jafü 2 was already ordering its fighters to land. The First and Second Gruppen each claimed single Spitfires; one Second Gruppe aircraft force-landed on Mardyck. JG 2 claimed eight Spitfires for the loss of one pilot. The RAF lost four Spitfires and one Blenheim, the latter to anti-aircraft fire.

At dusk Oblt. Priller's 1st Staffel was ordered to patrol Calais in response to a reported RAF formation over the Channel. The Germans attacked a squadron of Spitfires but were then bounced by others, and Oblt. Heinrich Gottlob's Bf 109E-7 was hit. The badly-injured Gottlob nursed his plane back to land and bailed out over the Hardinghem hospital at 2105. Gottlob, a soldier in the Reichswehr since 1929 and a member of the Luftwaffe since its inception, eventually returned to the Geschwader as a staff officer, but never again flew in combat.

26 June

Jafü 2 spent almost two hours maneuvering its five Jagdgruppen in response to the morning's Circus, but successes were few. II/JG 26 claimed two Spitfires; JG 2, three. JG 2 lost five Bf 109Fs and two pilots.

27 June

The Channel defenders put in a full day parrying three Rodeos by No. 11 and No. 12 Group fighters, a Roadstead against shipping at Dunkirk, and a late-evening Circus to the Lille-Fives steel works. As evidence of the amount of flying required of the individual pilots, Obfw. Max Martin's logbook states that

his 8th Staffel Schwarm took off from Ligescourt at 1100 and 1250 on coastal patrols, made an Alarmstart at 1645 that did not contact the RAF, and made another Alarmstart at 2116, this time battling Spitfires. One Spitfire and one Hurricane were claimed from the afternoon sweeps, but the Geschwader's main successes were scored by Hptm. Pingel and his First Gruppe against the fighters escorting Circus No. 25's Blenheims. The Gruppe made contact over Roubaix, near the target, and continued to attack the formation until it crossed the coast. Four Spitfires were claimed without loss. The Second Gruppe lost Uffz. Otto Fiedrich, who was shot down by Spitfires near St. Omer; another aircraft of this Gruppe crash-landed after sustaining combat damage. Over the course of the day JG 2 claimed one Blenheim and three Spitfires, and reported no losses.

The Ergänzungsgruppe's 2nd Staffel had relocated from Cognac to Wevelghem by this date. It reported that one of its pilots was injured while taking off from Haamstede on a combat mission.

Oblt. Wilhelm-Ferdinand Galland completed operational training in the Ergänzungsgruppe and reported to the Second Gruppe. The third brother now serving in the Geschwader, the personable "Wutz" had enlisted in a Luftwaffe flak regiment in 1935 and had been commissioned and awarded the Iron Cross First Cross before volunteering for flight training.

28 June

JG 26's three Gruppen were airborne by 0815 versus Circus No. 26, which targeted the Comines power station. The First Gruppe made contact west of Lille and shot down one Spitfire from the close escort. Hptm. Schöpfel led the two Staffeln of his Third Gruppe along the coast from Dunkirk toward Calais, positioning his force up sun of the withdrawing RAF formation. His high Staffel, the 8th, was attacked from above and broke up in individual combat. The 8th Staffel Kapitän, Oblt. Micky Sprick, performed a routine split-S maneuver, only to have the right wing of his Bf 109F-2 collapse. Sprick had no chance to escape, and died in the crash; his final victory total was thirty-one, gained in 192 combat sorties. Hptm. Schöpfel claimed the Gruppe's only victory against the Circus escort. Sprick was the Geschwader's only fatality, but Oblt. Harald Grawatsch, the Second Gruppe adjutant, bailed out of his flaming Messerschmitt with such severe injuries that his leg had to be amputated, and several more pilots were injured while crash-landing their damaged fighters. The Comines power station was seriously damaged by the Blenheims' attack, and was shut down for three months for repairs. All in all, it was not a good day for the Geschwader.

Although Bf 109Fs had previously returned from missions with ripples in their wing skins, indicative of hidden damage to the wing structure, neither the factory nor the RLM thought the problem was serious. After Sprick's loss Oblt. Rolf Schrödter, the Third Gruppe technical officer, borrowed some strain gauges from Rechlin and ran his own experiments. The weak areas in the wing were identified and local stiffeners were designed. These could not be applied in the Geschwader shops, however, and Schrödter was given the job of flying obviously-damaged aircraft to the repair facility in Antwerp to have their wings replaced.

JG 26 Casualties: 25–28 June 1941

Date	Rank	Name	Cas	Unit	Aircraft	WNr	Mkgs	Place	Time	Cause
6/25/41	Fw.	Eierstock, Bartholomaeus	KIA	9	Bf 109F-2	12664		Dunkirk	12:45 PM	Spitfire

6/25/41	Oblt.	Gottlob, Heinrich	WIA	1	Bf 109E-77690		Hardinghem	9:05 PM	Spitfire
6/27/41	Uffz.	Fiedrich, Otto	KIA	4	Bf 109E-7 4183	wh 10	St. Omer		Spitfire
6/27/41	Gefr.	Niese, Alfred	no	E	Bf 109E-7 1132		Haamstede		takeoff
6/28/41	Oblt.	Sprick, Gustav	KIA	8 CO	Bf 109F-2 5743	bk 4	Gravelines-St Omer	8:48 AM	wing failed in combat
6/28/41	Uffz.	Friedrich, Hans	no	3	Bf 109E-7 970		Calais		Spitfire
6/28/41	Othr.	Uiberacker, F. Graf von	WIA	1	Bf 109E-7 3776		St. Omer-Wizemes		Spitfire
6/28/41	Lt.	Schmidt, Johannes	WIA	3	Bf 109E-7 7689		Samer/		Spitfire
6/28/41	Oblt.	Grawatsch, Harald	WIA	11 St	Bf 109E-7 6487		Le Touquet SE of St Omer		Spitfire

29 June

Oblt. Hans-Jürgen Westphal was given command of the 8th Staffel.

30 June

Response to the day's Circus 27 was muted. Oblt. Priller scored JG 26's only success; JG 2 claimed two Spitfires, and lost one Bf 109F-2 in a crash-landing after the combat.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 25–30 June 1941

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
6/25/41	Oblt.	Priller	1 CO	26	Spitfire	W of Gravelines	1:00 PM	610+616 Sqd	yes
6/25/41	Oblt.	Rysavy	2 CO	7	Spitfire	S of Dunkirk	12:40 PM	610+616 Sqd	yes
6/25/41	Oblt.	Rysavy	2 CO	8	Spitfire	SW of Dunkirk	12:56 PM	610+616 Sqd	yes
6/25/41	Lt.	Schmidt J.	3	2	Spitfire	10km N of Dunkirk	4:45 PM		yes
6/25/41	Oblt.	Schneider W.	6 CO	13	Spitfire	Dunkirk	4:40 PM		yes
6/26/41	Hptm.	Adolph	II CO	18	Spitfire	Mardyck	11:55 AM		yes
6/26/41	Lt.	Sternberg	5	1	Spitfire	Dunkirk	11:50 AM		yes
6/27/41	Hptm.	Pingel	1 CO	21	Spitfire	near Roubaix	9:43 PM		yes
6/27/41	Oblt.	Priller	1 CO	27	Spitfire	SW of Gravelines	10:00 PM		yes
6/27/41	Uffz.	Held	1	2	Spitfire	N of Dunkirk	10:07 PM		yes
6/27/41	Fw.	Jäckel E.	2	5	Spitfire	E of Sangatte	10:10 PM		yes
6/27/41	Oblt.	Ebersberger	4 CO	10	Spitfire	Marquise	4:59 PM	19+266 Sqd	yes
6/27/41	Hptm.	Schöpfel	III CO	25	Hurricane	unknown	5:05 PM		yes
6/28/41	Uffz.	Babenz	3	2	Spitfire	W of Lille	8:25 AM	303 Sqd	yes
6/28/41	Hptm.	Schöpfel	III CO	26	Spitfire	Audruicq	8:50 AM	306 Sqd	yes
6/30/41	Oblt.	Priller	1 CO	28	Spitfire	10km NW of St. Inglevert	6:56 PM	603+616 Sqd	yes

1 July

Several RAF feints along the coast were ignored by the German controllers. Fw. Walter Grünlinger and Uffz. Heinz Richter transferred into the Geschwader from other Luftwaffe units. Hptm. Adolph's Second Gruppe had not been effective while flying from Maldegheem, and began transferring to Moorsele, which was farther west in Belgium and closer to the routes of the Circuses. The airfield at Moorsele had been built in 1937. Its grass landing ground was well drained, and it had a few permanent maintenance buildings that would be useful for servicing the Gruppe's new FW 190As, which were scheduled to begin arriving within the month.

2 July

The Geschwader lost another Staffel Kapitän and a pre-war veteran of the Geschwader, Oberleutnant Martin Rysavy of the 2nd Staffel. He was shot down



The rudder of Hptm. Adolph's Bf 109E-7, photographed at Moorsele in July. At this time Adolph had about twenty victories, nine in JG 27 and eleven in II/JG 26, plus one in Spain. One possible explanation for the fifteen light and fourteen dark bars is that a dark bar was painted when a claim was filed, and the first available bar was overpainted in light paint whenever a claim was confirmed. (*Tottmann via Vanoverbeke*)

by German 88mm flak while returning from a convoy escort mission. Rysavy's final score was eight victories in 177 combat sorties. His loss was the only blemish on JG 26's record for an otherwise successful day. All five Jafü 2 Gruppen intercepted Circus No. 29, a raid on Lille by twelve Blenheims. The First Gruppe attacked from the sun immediately after the formation turned away from the target and got to the bombers. Obstlt. Galland and the Chef of the First Gruppe Stabskompanie, Hptm. Rudolf Bieber, each downed Blenheims, and the Gruppe claimed three RAF fighters. Lt. Erich Wenzel bailed out over St. Omer, but this incident was apparently not combat-related. The Second and Third Gruppe each claimed a Spitfire. JG 2 claimed five Spitfires in this battle, and lost three Bf 109Fs, but no pilots. Fighter Command lost eight pilots, and Bomber Command lost the two Blenheims and their crews.

Lt. Horst Ulenberg succeeded

Oblt. Rysavy as Kapitän of the 2nd Staffel.

3 July

In the morning Circus No. 30 attacked St. Omer. Its six Blenheims were escorted by fifteen fighter squadrons. The First and Third Gruppen made contact over St. Omer, as did JG 2. Three Spitfires went down, but the First Gruppe lost Hptm. Bieber, at forty the Geschwader's oldest pilot and one of its few ardent Nazis. JG 2 lost its Kommodore, Hptm. Wilhelm Balthasar, who was shot down in flames over Aire. His replacement, Maj. Walter Oesau, reported in the next day from III/JG 3.

Circus No. 31 was flown against the Hazebrouck motor yards, and crossed the coast at 1515. Again, six Blenheims did the bombing; their escort comprised sixteen fighter squadrons. The First and Third Gruppen and one JG 2 Gruppe attacked the formation between Hazebrouck and Gravelines; the Second Gruppe arrived late from Moorsele and Maldegheem and failed to make contact. Three Spitfires went down before 1550, when Jafü 2 ordered all of its fighters to assemble over St. Omer to await another incoming raid. The new RAF formation, probably the rear support wing, contained no bombers, and at 1616 the German fighters were ordered to land. One JG 2 pilot bailed out of his



A July lineup of Second Gruppe Bf 109E-7s on Moorsele. Note the variety of camouflage schemes represented. (*Tottmann via Vanoverbeke*)



Another photograph of Second Gruppe Bf 109E-7s on Moorsele. (*Tottmann via Vanoverbeke*)

damaged Bf 109F, and another JG 2 Messerschmitt force-landed with combat damage. JG 26 suffered no casualties during the afternoon raid.

4 July

The Chocques chemical plant was the target for Circus No. 32. The First and Third Gruppen and one JG 2 Gruppe made the interception south of Lille. Fighter Command won the day's battle. Only two Spitfires failed to return to England. The First Gruppe's Lt. Joachim Kehrhahn, flying his second combat mission, was shot down and killed northeast of St. Pol. A Third Gruppe pilot was forced to bail out near Hazebrouck. Three JG 2 Messerschmitts went down near Béthune; one Richthofen pilot was killed and a second was injured.

The cost of the RAF's offensive to the Luftwaffe, while far from negligible,

was readily absorbed. Between 14 June and 4 July the two Kanalgeschwader lost thirty-two pilots and forty-eight Bf 109s. Fighter Command lost sixty-two pilots and eighty aircraft; the score was thus approximately two to one in the Luftwaffe's favor. Fighter Command's victory claims totalled 214-84-95 German fighters. As in the Battle of Britain, these inflated claims were allowed to stand for morale purposes, even though RAF Intelligence kept an accurate Luftwaffe order of battle and monitored the German requests for replacement aircraft by ULTRA radio intercepts. The RAF's commanders had to know that their pilots' claims, amounting to 167 per cent of German table of organization strength in the theater, were absurdly high.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 2-4 July 1941

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
7/2/41	Obstlt.	Galland A.	Ge CO	70	Blenheim	Merville	12:30 PM	226 Sqd	yes
7/2/41	Hptm.	Bieber	1 St	1	Blenheim	S of Merville	12:35 PM	226 Sqd	yes
7/2/41	Hptm.	Pingel	1 CO	22	Hurricane	S of Dunkirk	12:50 PM		yes
7/2/41	Oblt.	Priller	1 CO	29	Spitfire	10km W of Lille	12:45 PM		yes
7/2/41	Lt.	Ulenberg	2	10	Spitfire	E of Boukerque	12:50 PM		yes
7/2/41	Oblt.	Schneider W.	6 CO	14	Spitfire	Mardyck	12:55 PM		yes
7/2/41	Hptm.	Schöpfel	III CO	27	Spitfire	S Lillers	12:50 PM		yes
7/3/41	Lt.	Harder	2	1	Spitfire	S of Boukerque	3:45 PM	266 Sqd	yes
7/3/41	Lt.	Naumann	9	3	Spitfire	unknown	11:45 AM		yes
7/4/41	Oblt.	Priller	1 CO	30	Spitfire	10km SW of St. Omer	2:55 PM		yes
7/4/41	Gefr.	Christof	1	1	Spitfire	W of St. Omer	2:58 PM		yes
7/4/41	Hptm.	Seifert	3 CO	11	Spitfire	N of Béthune	3:20 PM		unk
7/4/41	Obfw.	Busch E.	9	5	Spitfire	unknown	3:05 PM		yes

JG 26 Casualties: 2-4 July 1941

Date	Rank	Name	Cas	Unit	Aircraft	WNr	Mkgs	Place	Time	Cause
7/2/41	Oblt.	Rysavy, Martin	KIA	2 CO	Bf 109E-7	3213		E of Calais		own flak
7/2/41	Obstlt.	Galland, Adolf	WIA	Ge CO	Bf 109F-2					Spitfire engine
7/2/41	Lt.	Wenzel, Kurt-Erich	WIFA	1	Bf 109F-2	12853		St. Omer		
7/3/41	Hptm.	Bieber, Rudolf	KIA	1 St	Bf 109F-2	7686		St. Omer		Spitfire fighter
7/4/41	Lt.	Kehrhahn, Joachim	KIA	3	Bf 109F-2	6476		NE of St. Pol		

5 July

The first of the RAF's four-engined heavy bombers, the Short Stirling, was entering service, and the decision was made to use them to beef up the bomber strength of the Circus. They made their first daylight appearance as part of Circus No. 33. Three Stirlings attacked the Lille-Fives steel works, while one bombed the Abbeville motor yards. The defenders, probably three or four Gruppen, did not reach the bombers. The First Gruppe claimed three Spitfires west of Dunkirk; JG 2 claimed one. Fighter Command lost two Spitfires, while the Germans suffered no losses.

6 July

A large RAF feint led Jafü 2 to order all five of its Jagdgruppen to take off a little after 1100. At 1125 enemy aircraft were reported approaching Dunkirk at between 6,500 and 14,000 feet. Three of the Luftwaffe patrols were ordered home at 1140; the others were ordered to patrol between Calais and Dunkirk, but all had landed by 1227. The five Gruppen were again airborne at 1400 versus

Circus No. 35, a raid on Lille by six Stirlings. Hptm. Pingel's First Gruppe made contact over Lille and battled the Spitfires until low fuel forced them to break off over the Channel. Other formations were ordered to cut off the British withdrawal between Dunkirk and Calais. Again today the British fighters kept the Messerschmitts away from the bombers. JG 26 claimed seven Spitfires and reported damage to two Bf 109s. JG 2 claimed six Spitfires, and reported no damage. Six Spitfires went down over France or the Channel; three more crashed in England.

7 July

Today the RAF dispatched three Circuses against targets in northeastern France. In the morning one Stirling, escorted by eleven fighter squadrons, bombed Hazebrouck. The lone Stirling passed over the First Gruppe's St. Omer airfield at 0946. A little later three Stirlings with nine fighter squadrons attacked the Potez factory in Albert. The First Gruppe made its interception as the first formation passed Boulogne on its way out, and Oblt. Priller claimed the Spitfire of G/C Harry Broadhurst, the Hornchurch station commander; Broadhurst was able to reach England in his damaged Spitfire. The Gruppe then made the only effective interception of the Albert force, and claimed four Spitfires; one British loss is known. The 4th Staffel's Fw. Erwin Deuse was killed on his first combat sortie when his engine failed over Bruges, near the Gruppe's base at Maldegheem.

In the afternoon Circus two Stirlings bombed Chocques, escorted by thirteen fighter squadrons. The 2nd Staffel's Lt. Hans Dippel scored the Geschwader's only success, claiming a Spitfire over Samer. JG 2 claimed three Spitfires and two Hurricanes from this force, and lost one pilot. Fighter Command lost 2-3 Spitfires. Three Messerschmitts, one each from the Second Gruppe, the Third Gruppe, and JG 2, made forced landings after the day's combat missions.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 5-7 July 1941

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
7/5/41	Oblt.	Priller	1 CO	31	Spitfire	4km NW of Dunkirk	1:40 PM	54+616 Sqd	yes
7/5/41	Lt.	Unzeitig	1	2	Spitfire	W of Dunkirk	1:40 PM	54+616 Sqd	yes
7/5/41	Lt.	Ulenberg	2 CO	11	Spitfire	St. Herberthoab	1:25 PM	54+616 Sqd	unk
7/6/41	Lt.	Uiberacker	1	1	Spitfire	NW of Dunkirk	2:55 PM		yes
7/6/41	Lt.	Ulenberg	2 CO	12	Spitfire	S of Soex	2:48 PM		unk
7/6/41	Lt.	Ulenberg	2 CO	13	Spitfire	NW of Dunkirk	2:25 PM		yes
7/6/41	Oblt.	Otte	3	1	Spitfire	near Houthem	2:36 PM		yes
7/6/41	Hptm.	Adolph	11 CO	19	Spitfire	Wormhout	2:45 PM	74 Sqd	yes
7/6/41	Lt.	Galland P.	8	1	Spitfire	unknown			unk
7/6/41	Uffz.	Ömler	9	2	Spitfire	unknown			unk
7/7/41	Oblt.	Priller	1 CO	32	Spitfire	3km N of Gravelines	10:00 AM	Hornchurch	yes
7/7/41	Oblt.	Priller	1 CO	33	Spitfire	W of Somme Estuary	10:47 AM		yes
7/7/41	Lt.	Unzeitig	1	3	Spitfire	SW of Boulogne	10:56 AM		yes
7/7/41	Uffz.	Held	1	3	Spitfire	SW of Boulogne	10:58 AM		yes
7/7/41	Lt.	Dippel	2	1	Spitfire	Samer	3:20 PM		yes
7/7/41	Oblt.	Otte	3	2	Spitfire	mid-Channel	10:45 AM		yes

8 July

The RAF sent three Stirlings to Lens on a dawn raid. At 0610 the Jafü scrambled the First and Third Gruppen and at least one JG 2 Gruppe; the Richthofen fighters claimed one Hurricane near Béthune, and the First Gruppe downed two Spitfires over the Channel. In mid-afternoon Circus No. 40, comprising three Stirlings escorted by nineteen squadrons of fighters, was dispatched to Lille. At

1510 the formation was reported approaching the coast between Etaples and Dunkirk. The three airborne Gruppen were ordered to remain near Hazebrouck and then patrol south of Lille. Their first attacks penetrated the cover wing and forced the Stirlings to take evasive action and miss their target. After taking off, the First and Second Gruppen were ordered to Calais at 1530 and made their attacks as the retiring formation approached the coast. The First Gruppe's pursuit continued over the Channel. Pingel's men claimed a total of six Spitfires. Gefr. Ulrich Grebe downed two of these, and he was immediately promoted to Unteroffizier. Hptm. Adolph's Gruppe claimed three Spitfires, one on behalf of Uffz. Ulrich Finke, who was shot down and killed by a Spitfire after a long lone dogfight. His opponent then crash-landed. JG 2 claimed eight Spitfires from the afternoon Circus, for the loss of one pilot. Fighter Command lost seven pilots on this mission.

The wing of Uffz. Albrecht Held's Bf 109F-2 failed during one of the First Gruppe's combats near St. Omer, and he was killed.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 8 July 1941

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
7/8/41	Uffz.	Held	1	4	Spitfire	Merckeghem	6:35 AM		yes
7/8/41	Lt.	Aistleitner	1	2	Spitfire	10km NW of Cap Gris Nez	6:40 AM		unk
7/8/41	Oblt.	Priller	1 CO	34	Spitfire	10km N of St. Omer	3:30 PM		yes
7/8/41	Gefr.	Grebe	1	1	Spitfire	SE of Dunkirk	3:40 PM		yes
7/8/41	Gefr.	Grebe	1	2	Spitfire	N of Dunkirk	3:45 PM		yes
7/8/41	Oblt.	Kahse	1	1	Spitfire	NNW of Coxyde/ Calais	3:45 PM		unk
7/8/41	Uffz.	Fröhlich	2	2	Spitfire	NE of Calais	3:50 PM		yes
7/8/41	Lt.	Schauder	3	1	Spitfire	8km NE of Gravelines	3:50 PM		yes
7/8/41	Hptm.	Adolph	II CO	20	Spitfire	Gravelines	3:30 PM		yes
7/8/41	Uffz.	Finke	6	1	Spitfire	near Ypres			unk
7/8/41	Obfw.	Meyer W.	6	9	Spitfire	Hazebrouck	3:40 PM	303 Sqd	yes

JG 26 Casualties: 7–8 July 1941

Date	Rank	Name	Cas	Unit	Aircraft	WNr	Mkgs	Place	Time	Cause
7/7/41	Fw.	Deuse, Erwin	KIFA	4	Bf 109E-7	6480		Bruges	9:25 AM	engine
7/8/41	Uffz.	Held, Albrecht	KIA	1	Bf 109F-2	9157		8km N of St. Omer		wing failed
7/8/41	Uffz.	Finke, Karl	KIA	6	Bf 109E-7	3711	bk 6	S of Ypres		Spitfire

9 July

The RAF's main effort was an attack on Béthune by three Stirlings, covered by the usual fighter sweeps and feints. The First and Third Gruppen were scrambled at 1320, and after some juggling for position attacked the British formation over St. Omer at 1400, just after it turned for the return flight. The First Gruppe claimed four Spitfires in this combat; the 8th Staffel's Obfw. Martin also claimed one, and his Staffel may have claimed another that was unconfirmed. One First Gruppe aircraft force-landed at Étaples with combat damage. JG 2 pilots claimed one Hurricane and nine Spitfires at this time, and three Spitfires from a later sweep, for the possible loss of one pilot. Fighter Command lost 6-5 Spitfires and 2-0 Hurricanes during the day.

10 July

The target for Circus No. 42's three Stirlings was Chocques. Owing to thick clouds the bombers missed their entry point and overflowed Boulogne, where one ran into a salvo of flak and blew up. The German interceptors had trouble with the clouds and the Boulogne flak and firm contact was not made until the RAF formation was crossing the coast on its way out. Fighter Command lost eleven Spitfires in the ensuing battles. JG 2 claimed ten Spitfires, without loss. The Second Gruppe lost two Bf 109E-7s, and made no claims. Hptm. Pingel's Gruppe shot down three Spitfires and damaged one Stirling, but lost Uffz. Erich Hammon into the Channel. Pingel, apparently alone, followed the Stirling to England, where he further damaged the bomber's tail section. The upper gunner's return fire hit the Messerschmitt's engine, and Pingel descended to low altitude, where a Spitfire's attack induced him to force-land his aircraft in a grain field.

Rolf Pingel's First Gruppe had been far and away the most successful of the Geschwader's units in the Channel fighting. His victory string had now ended at twenty-two, gained in 250 combat missions. His successor as Kommandeur was Hptm. Johannes Seifert of the 3rd Staffel, at this time the senior commissioned pilot of the Geschwader in length of service, having joined I/JG 234 in Köln in January 1938. Oblt. Walter Otte succeeded Seifert as the 3rd Staffel's Kapitän.

The British now had their first example of a Bf 109F-2. It was quickly repaired and sent to the Air Fighting Development Unit, which flew it extensively in mock combats until it crashed on 20 October. The lessons it provided were misleading, as improved models of Messerschmitt's fighter were already being taken on strength by JG 26. The most important was the Bf 109F-4, with the new DB 601E engine; it was armed with two MG 17s and a new engine cannon, the MG 151/20, which was an MG 151 rebored from its original 15mm to 20mm. The DB 601E offered an appreciable increase in power over the DB 601N, from 1,200 to 1,350 horsepower, and the Bf 109F-4's speed advantage over the RAF's new Spitfire V was significant – 395 mph at 38,000 feet, versus 371 mph at 37,500 feet.

Oblt. Johannes Schmid joined the Geschwader after a tour of instructor duty. Schmid had scored nine victories while flying with 1/JG 2 during the Battle of Britain, and Galland assigned this promising pilot to his own Stabsschwarm.

11 July

The RAF's major raid was an attack by three Stirlings on the submarine repair yards at le Trait, west of Rouen. To divert the fighters of Jafü 2, Fighter Command flew a three-wing sweep of Lille – the raid qualified as a "Circus" by including one Blenheim. This was followed forty-five minutes later by another sweep, timed to catch the Germans on the ground refuelling. For over two hours, from 1413 to 1631, Genmaj. Osterkamp ordered his five Jagdgruppen to various assembly points over the Channel coast. Hptm. Schöpfel's understrength Third Gruppe scrambled from Ligescourt at 1434 and was the first to score. Schöpfel claimed a Spitfire at 1455; one of his Gruppe's Bf 109Fs was damaged over Boulogne, but landed safely. The First Gruppe and the two JG 2 Gruppen also made contact; the First Gruppe claimed two Spitfires, and JG 2 claimed three, for the loss of one pilot killed over Calais. Seifert's Gruppe sortied again in response to Fighter Command's late sweep, and claimed four more Spitfires without loss.

The Ergänzungsgruppe sent a large draft of pilots to the Geschwader. Lt. Josef Heyarts, Fw. Heinz-Günther Adam, and Uffz. Gottfried Dietze joined the First Gruppe; Uffz. Werner Hetzel, a former Ju 87 gunner, the Second; and Oblt. Wilfried Sieling and Uffz. Wilhelm Latka, the Third.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 9–11 July 1941

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
7/9/41	Oblt.	Eickhoff	I St	2	Spitfire	SW of St. Omer	2:03 PM		yes
7/9/41	Oblt.	Priller	1 CO	35	Spitfire	S of Aire/ SE of Samer	2:00 PM		yes
7/9/41	Oblt.	Priller	1 CO	36	Spitfire	2km S of Calais	2:10 PM		yes
7/9/41	Lt.	Ulenberg	2 CO	14	Spitfire	10km N of Etaples	2:15 PM		yes
7/9/41	Obfw.	Martin	8	4	Spitfire	St. Omer	2:10 PM		yes
7/10/41	Oblt.	Priller	1 CO	37	Spitfire	N of St. Omer	12:30 PM		yes
7/10/41	Oblt.	Priller	1 CO	38	Spitfire	5km NW of Boulogne	12:40 PM		yes
7/10/41	Lt.	Unzeitig	1	4	Spitfire	N of Cap Gris Nez	12:43 PM		yes
7/11/41	Hptm.	Seifert	I CO	12	Spitfire	E of Wimereux	3:05 PM		yes
7/11/41	Oblt.	Priller	1 CO	39	Spitfire	20km W of Calais	4:10 PM		yes
7/11/41	Lt.	Ulenberg	2 CO	15	Spitfire	W of Cap Gris Nez	3:20 PM		yes
7/11/41	Lt.	Ulenberg	2 CO	16	Spitfire	SE of Dunkirk	4:20 PM		yes
7/11/41	Lt.	Harder	2	2	Spitfire	N of Calais	4:23 PM		yes
7/11/41	Fw.	Babenz	3	3	Spitfire	10km NW of Gravelines	4:30 PM		unk
7/11/41	Hptm.	Schöpfel	III CO	28	Spitfire	unknown	2:55 PM		yes

12 July

The RAF felt that they had been successful on the 11th, and repeated their tactics today. The principal mission was an attack by two Stirlings on the St. Omer ship lift; it was covered by a diversionary raid on Gravelines by a single Blenheim, covered by three wings of Spitfires. Once again the German controllers had trouble positioning the defenders, and few attacks were made. JG 2 claimed a single Spitfire and lost one Bf 109F, whose pilot bailed out with injuries. JG 26 made no known claims. The 2nd Staffel was involved in a combat over the Channel with a large number of Spitfires, following which Uffz. Gottfried Dietze, who was on his first combat mission, crash-landed his Bf 109E-7 near St. Omer. His Kapitän, Oblt. Horst Ulenberg, was followed back to shore by a Spitfire and was shot down and killed over Coquelles. Ulenberg had joined the Staffel in September 1939, and had been one of the First Gruppe’s most successful pilots since the return to France, with ten victories over Brittany and the Channel coast. He had been Staffel Kapitän for only ten days.

JG 26 Casualties: 10–12 July 1941

Date	Rank	Name	Cas	Unit	Aircraft	WNr	Mkgs	Place	Time	Cause
7/10/41	Uffz.	Hammon, Erich	KIA	2	Bf 109E-7	3855	bk 7	Channel Narrows		fighter
7/10/41	Hptm.	Pingel, Rolf	POW	I CO	Bf 109F-2	12764	<<	Dover	2:40 PM	Stirling + Spitfire
7/10/41	Lt.	Reiche, Heinz	WIA	5	Bf 109E-7	6459		Guines		Spitfire
7/12/41	Lt.	Ulenberg, Horst	KIA	2 CO	Bf 109E-7	3739		Coquelles		Spitfire

13 July

Two Ergänzungsgruppe Bf 109E-4s collided in the air over Desselghem. Both pilots bailed out safely.

Oblt. Christian Eickhoff was named to succeed Oblt. Ulenberg as 2nd Staffel Kapitän.

14 July

Circus No. 48 was the day's only large-scale RAF incursion. Six Blenheims bombed the Hazebrouck motor yards, escorted by sixteen fighter squadrons. In response Jafü 2 sent up only two Jagdgruppen. The Third Gruppe sortied from Ligescourt at 0945, just as the First Gruppe took off from St. Omer. They made a coordinated attack as the RAF formation was turning from the target, and followed the British fighters back over the Channel. Schöpfel's Gruppe claimed one Spitfire, and lost Gefr. Robert Kleinecke, who was shot down and killed over Marquise. Seifert's men claimed three Spitfires, and suffered no losses.

Oblt. Pips Priller, the 1st Staffel's popular Kapitän, had enjoyed a remarkable run of victories since the Geschwader's return to the Channel. Between 16 June and 11 July he shot down nineteen RAF aircraft, including seventeen Spitfires, to bring his total of confirmed victories to thirty-nine. The ground staff of his Staffel had prepared a garland of oak leaves to drape around his neck when he returned after his 40th – forty victories was the requirement at that time for the award of the Knight's Cross with Oak Leaves. He did not disappoint them. His Staffel attacked No. 72 Squadron of the high cover south of Dunkirk at 33,000 feet just after the British fighters had turned to face the sun. The Spitfire pilots, in line-astern sections of three, had been concentrating on keeping track of a Staffel of Bf 109s below them, and had just been diverted by a Messerschmitt's attack on a neighboring squadron when Priller attacked from dead ahead. His first burst of fire sent one Spitfire down in flames. Its pilot bailed out successfully and was quickly taken prisoner; he had never seen his attacker.



The 1st Staffel's Oblt. Pips Priller takes a victory lap around the Clairmarais dispersal after scoring his fortieth victory on 14 July. (*Molge*)

Luftflotte 3 had forwarded to the OKL a request by Obstlt. Galland for some replacement pilots with Western Front experience. Uffz. Karl "Charlie" Willius arrived on this day from the Eastern Front and was assigned to the First Gruppe. Willius had been a pilot in JG 51 since May 1940, and had twelve victories to his credit.

17 July

Jafü 2's controllers spent the day shuttling Staffeln and Gruppen back and forth to parry British fighter sweeps, most of which did not cross the French coast. According to their logbooks, Uffz. Dietze of the 2nd Staffel made two combat sorties, and Obfw. Martin of the 8th Staffel made two combat sorties and one patrol flight. Results were slight. An early 2nd Staffel patrol shot down one Spitfire. The 9th Staffel's Uffz. Gerhard Ömler was shot down and killed by German flak while on convoy patrol. JG 2 claimed one Spitfire and one Blenheim, probably over the convoy; three JG 2 aircraft crashed or crash-landed with combat damage. A late-evening sweep by No. 308 Squadron (Polish) penetrated too far inland, to St. Omer, and was attacked by an estimated sixty Bf 109s. The Poles fought their way out, claiming 3-2-0 Bf 109s, but lost three of their number. The victorious pilots and unit(s) have not been identified, but as Obfw. Martin apparently took part in this battle the victors probably belonged to III/JG 26, and their claims are among those from this Gruppe that have not yet been located.



The 2nd Staffel's Uffz. Heinz-Günther Adam standing beside his Bf 109F at Audembert, shortly after claiming his first victory on 17 July. (*Dietze via Meyer*)

18 July

Most of the day's combats took place around a convoy that the Germans were attempting to pass through the Dover Straits. JG 2 claimed two Spitfires in mid-morning; details are unknown. In late morning three Blenheims attempted to bomb the convoy, which was passing Gravelines. First Gruppe Messerschmitts shot down two of the Blenheims and damaged a Spitfire from the escort, which apparently comprised only a single squadron, No. 222. The Spitfires damaged a First Gruppe aircraft, which crashed at Bourges. A 6th Staffel Schwarm got involved in the battle, and shot down a Spitfire from this squadron.

After diving to split up the Blenheims' escort, but before making his own attack on the light bombers, Fw. Ernst Jäckel saw a large aircraft of unknown type some distance away, very close to the water. Jäckel, in a new Bf 109F-4, led his Schwarm to investigate the new target. It proved to be a

Stirling, flying a mission of its own with an escort of only four Spitfires. Jäckel and his wingman made five attacks on the Stirling, which had turned back toward Dover, while his second Rotte held off the escort. The Stirling finally bounced on the surface of the water and crashed, several miles off Deal. As the

first German pilot to bring down a four-engined bomber, Jäckel was awarded 500 Reichsmarks and an honor trophy.

Uffz. Adolf “Addi” Glunz reported to the Geschwader and was assigned to the Second Gruppe. Glunz had completed his training in early 1941 and joined 4/JG 52 on the Channel Front. He shot down two British fighters in the brief period before JG 52 moved east, and claimed three more victories in the first three weeks of the Russian campaign, an outstanding record for a new pilot. He had now been transferred to JG 26 in response to Galland’s plea for experienced replacement pilots. He flew his first check flight with his new unit on 24 July. Addi Glunz would become one of the Schlageter Geschwader’s best-known and most successful pilots.

19 July

During the morning the Jafü warned its airborne units to beware of more RAF shipping attacks, but the day’s major incursion proved to be another three-Stirling bombing raid. The First and Third Gruppen were already airborne and met the formation south of Dunkirk, after the bombers had dropped their loads on Lille. The 2nd Staffel’s Lt. Heinz Rahardt was shot down by a Spitfire; Rahardt bailed out with injuries and landed near Beselare. One Stirling was hit by the Dunkirk flak and started a controlled descent to allow the crew to bail out. Oblt. Eickhoff and his wingman attacked the bomber and set one wing on fire, following which the pilot bailed out. The First Gruppe followed the formation out to sea and downed two No. 72 Sqd. Spitfires. During his return flight the engine of Uffz. Ulrich Grebe’s Bf 109F-4 quit. He belly-landed his aircraft in high grass near Watten, but the plane hit a wall and caught fire, killing Grebe. JG 2 scored the day’s only other success, downing a No. 92 Sqd. Spitfire, and suffered no losses.

Lt. Hans Witzel transferred into the First Gruppe from JG 27, and was immediately named Gruppe technical officer. Obfw. Paul Czwilinski completed operational training in the Ergänzungsgruppe and joined the 2nd Staffel.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 14–19 July 1941

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
7/14/41	Hptm.	Seifert	I CO	13	Spitfire	S of Dunkirk	10:30 AM		yes
7/14/41	Oblt.	Priller	1 CO	40	Spitfire	1km N of Ferques (S of Dunkirk)	10:30 AM	72 Sqd	yes
7/14/41	Uffz.	Christof	1	2	Spitfire	E of Dover	10:40 AM		unk
7/14/41	Oblt.	Meyer	8	2	Spitfire	unknown	10:20 AM		yes
7/17/41	Uffz.	Adam H-G.	2	1	Spitfire	S of Cassel	9:00 PM		yes
7/18/41	Uffz.	Fröhlich	2	3	Spitfire	NW of Dunkirk	11:30 AM		yes
7/18/41	Fw.	Jäckel E.	2	6	Stirling	SE of Lille	11:40 AM	XV Sqd	yes
7/18/41	Oblt.	Otte	3 CO	3	Blenheim	S of Mardyck	11:25 AM	21 Sqd	yes
7/18/41	Lt.	Schauder	3	2	Blenheim	near Gravelines	11:28 AM	21 Sqd	yes
7/18/41	Fw.	Leibold	3	2	Spitfire	near St. Pol	11:29 AM		yes
7/18/41	Obfw.	Meyer W.	6	10	Spitfire	Dunkirk	12:20 PM	222 Sqd	yes
7/19/41	Lt.	Heyarts	I St	1	Spitfire	N of Dunkirk	2:15 PM	72 Sqd	yes
7/19/41	Oblt.	Priller	1 CO	41	Spitfire	5km off Dover	2:35 PM	72 Sqd	yes
7/19/41	Oblt.	Eickhoff	2 CO	3	Stirling	SE of Bergues	2:25 PM	XV Sqd	yes

JG 26 Casualties: 14–19 July 1941

Date	Rank	Name	Cas	Unit	Aircraft	WNr	Mkgs	Place	Time	Cause
7/14/41	Gefr.	Kleinecke, Robert	KIA	9	Bf 109F-2	6735	yl 3	Marquise	10:05 AM	fighter

7/17/41	Uffz.	Ömler, Gerhard	KIA	9	Bf 109F-2 12858	yl 5	10km W of Le Touquet	6:50 PM	own
7/19/41	Uffz.	Grebe, Ulrich	KIFA	1	Bf 109F-4 8364		Watten/St Omer		engine
7/19/41	Lt.	Rahardt, Heinz	WIA	2	Bf 109F-4 8346		Courtrai/ Beselare	1:30 PM	Spitfire

20 July

Several Channel units were moved to small airfields right on the coast for better protection of a convoy – the 2nd Staffel flew from Audembert, and the 8th Staffel operated from Le Touquet on this day. A number of Blenheims and Spitfires were reported over the ships, but any bombing attacks were inconclusive, probably hampered by the weather. One JG 2 pilot crashed on Abbeville-Drucat after combat, killing the pilot. The only known German victory was scored by the 8th Staffel's Obfw. Max Martin, who shot down a Curtiss Tomahawk west of Le Touquet at 1605. His victory cry, and reports by others of the aircraft down in the Channel, were transmitted over the open radio channel to the Jafü, and were picked up by the British radio intercept service.

Pilots arriving from the Ergänzungsgruppe included Uffz. Erich Schick and Lt. Eugen Kotiza, who joined the First Gruppe, and Obfw. Heinrich Bierwirth, who joined the Second.

21 July

The day's flying began at dawn, with patrols over Channel shipping by Third Gruppe Schwärme. An early RAF buildup led the Jafü to scramble the First and Second Gruppen and at least one JG 2 Gruppe. The British formation was another three-Stirling raid on Lille. Again the big bombers proved easy targets for the anti-aircraft gunners. A Stirling lost one engine to flak and a second to Hptm. Seifert's attack over the Channel; the British pilot succeeded in bringing the bomber back for a successful landing at Manston, which was becoming the RAF's principal emergency airfield. Seifert's men shot down two Spitfires of the escort. The Second Gruppe shot down a No. 602 Sqd. Spitfire over Lille, but lost Ogfr. Heinrich Gleixner to the RAF fighters. Another Second Gruppe Messerschmitt sustained serious damage in a combat over Amiens at an undetermined time. JG 2 also intercepted the Stirling raid, and claimed five Spitfires for the loss of one Bf 109F.

In mid-afternoon three Stirlings were reported by naval forces to be crossing the Channel, and at least one formation, from the First Gruppe, was scrambled to meet them, but the bombers turned back. Four Gruppen made Alarmstarts at 2010 to meet what proved to be only a Rodeo, with no bombers. The Fighter Command formation was met near Montreuil, and lost 3-1 Spitfires. The only known claim is that of the 2nd Staffel's Uffz. Gottfried Dietze, who was flying his 8th combat sortie since joining the unit on 11 July; the other victorious pilots were probably from the Third Gruppe, which also flew this mission. Jafü 2 issued its last orders at 2111, when all German aircraft not in contact with the enemy were told to land.

Over the next few days the Ergänzungsgruppe sent Uffz. Albert Schlager and Ogfr. Alois Krieger to the First Gruppe and Fw. Adolf Garbe and Obfw. Helmut Ufer to the Second. Garbe was a former infantryman who had won the Iron Cross Second Class in Poland. Ufer had been a tank driver in the Reichswehr and had been released from the service in 1935. He had volunteered for the Luftwaffe at the beginning of the war, and began flight training in March 1940.



The gun camera records the 2nd Staffel's Uffz. Gottfried Dietze closing in on a Spitfire. (*Dietze via Meyer*)



Uffz. Dietze's first victim. No. 616 Squadron's Sgt. Mabbett made a smooth forced landing near St. Omer on 21 July, but died of his injuries. Note the damage in the cockpit area. (*Dietze via Meyer*)

22 July

The RAF kept its bombers at home, and the Jafü kept its fighters away from most of Fighter Command's fighter sweeps. In the afternoon No. 308 Squadron Spitfires shot up one of the St. Omer airfields, and Oblt. Priller shot down one

of the Polish fighters. JG 2 claimed six Spitfires at this time, but their opponents have not been traced. In the evening Oblt. Johannes Schmid filed his first JG 26 victory claim, for a Spitfire, but the identity of his victim is unknown.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 20-22 July 1941

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
7/20/41	Obfw.	Martin	8	5	Tomahawk	W of Le Touquet in Channel	4:05 PM		yes
7/21/41	Hptm.	Seifert	I CO	14	Spitfire	SW of Ypres	8:25 AM		yes
7/21/41	Hptm.	Seifert	I CO	15	Stirling	Channel	8:40 AM	XV Sqd	dam
7/21/41	Oblt.	Kahse	1	2	Spitfire	W of Calais	8:45 AM		yes
7/21/41	Uffz.	Dietze	2	1	Spitfire	SW of Cap Gris Nez	9:00 PM	616 Sqd	yes
7/21/41	Obfw.	März	5	4	Spitfire	W of Lille	8:35 AM	602 Sqd	unk
7/22/41	Oblt.	Schmid	Ge St	10	Spitfire	unknown	7:00 PM		yes
7/22/41	Oblt.	Priller	1 CO	42	Spitfire	10km NW of Gravelines	1:40 PM	308 Sqd	yes

23 July

The day’s first Circus, an attack by six Blenheims on targets in the Forêt de Eperlecques northwest of St. Omer, prompted a spirited reaction from the German defenders. Obstlt. Galland had been grounded after his 70th victory and wounding on 21 June, but “assumed” that this referred only to combat flying. He was now on a “test flight”, and led the First Gruppe in an attack on the retiring formation south of Gravelines. Galland claimed one Spitfire from the escort, and his pilots claimed three more. JG 2 claimed fourteen; Fighter Command’s losses totalled 5-2 Spitfires.

Six Blenheims next attempted an attack on a tanker off Ostend. Hptm. Adolph’s Second Gruppe was for once positioned to make an effective attack, and shot down four of the bombers. After scoring his first victory, Uffz. Alfred Barthel was shot down by Spitfires and had to bail out. He was admitted to the Courtrai hospital for treatment of his burns.

Several RAF fighter sweeps were next met by small formations of German fighters, and a late-evening Circus – six Blenheims to Mazingarbe – was opposed by the Stabsschwärme from both Galland’s and Oesau’s Geschwader, plus four of the five available Jagdgruppen. JG 2 claimed an incredible ten Spitfires and three Hurricanes at this time, for the loss of two Bf 109Fs. The Second Gruppe’s only victory claim was Wutz Galland’s first, which was not confirmed; the Third Gruppe was apparently scoreless, and lost Ogfr. Ernst Krämer, who attempted to bail out at too great a speed after his aircraft was hit by a Spitfire and was killed when his parachute harness ripped apart. Oblt. Schmid of the JG 26 Stabsschwarm claimed a Spitfire, and Galland himself downed two with short bursts of zero-deflection direct fire from short range, his favorite mode of attack. Fighter Command lost a total of 11-5 Spitfires and one Hurricane during the day. Three pilots of Major Oesau’s Stabsschwarm – Oblt. Pflanz, Oblt. Leie, and Obfw. Seeger – alone claimed a total of thirteen Spitfires and two Hurricanes on this day, raising questions that must be left for the JG 2 historian to answer.

It is probable that Adolf Galland suffered his second war wound on the late-evening mission, although the date given in his memoirs is 2 July. While battling one Spitfire, Galland’s Bf 109F-4 was hit from behind by another. A cannon shell hit a piece of armor plating that Galland’s crew chief had only recently installed in the rear of the cockpit. Galland escaped, landed safely, and had the

Hardinghem doctors sew up his bloodied head once again. Galland was then grounded long enough for him to report to Adolf Hitler in East Prussia and receive his new award, the Knight's Cross with Oak Leaves and Swords.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 23 July 1941

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
7/23/41	Obstlt.	Galland A.	Ge CO	71	Spitfire	40km NW of Gravelines	1:35 PM		unk
7/23/41	Obstlt.	Galland A.	Ge CO	72	Spitfire	Bruges	8:10 PM		yes
7/23/41	Obstlt.	Galland A.	Ge CO	73	Spitfire	Bruges	8:15 PM		yes
7/23/41	Oblt.	Schmid	Ge St	11	Spitfire	Bruges	8:15 PM		yes
7/23/41	Lt.	Aistleitner	1	3	Spitfire	10km W of Gravelines	2:00 PM		yes
7/23/41	Oblt.	Priller	1 CO	43	Spitfire	15km NW of Gravelines	2:05 PM		yes
7/23/41	Lt.	Wenzel	1	1	Spitfire	WNW of Fort Philippe	2:05 PM		yes
7/23/41	Fw.	Leibold	3	3	Spitfire	S of Gravelines	2:00 PM		yes
7/23/41	Hptm.	Adolph	II CO	21	Blenheim	Ostend	2:20 PM	21 Sqd	yes
7/23/41	Lt.	Keller	II St	1	Blenheim	Ostend	2:25 PM	21 Sqd	yes
7/23/41	Uffz.	Barthel	5	1	Blenheim	Ostend	2:09 PM	21 Sqd	yes
7/23/41	Lt.	Kosse	5 CO	8	Blenheim	Ostend	2:20 PM	21 Sqd	yes
7/23/41	Oblt.	Galland W-F.	6	1	Spitfire	NW of Hesdin	8:50 PM		unk

JG 26 Casualties: 21–23 July 1941

Date	Rank	Name	Cas	Unit	Aircraft	WNr	Mkgs	Place	Time	Cause
7/21/41	Ogfr.	Gleixner, Heinrich	KIA	4	Bf 109E-7	6512		Lille		Spitfire
7/23/41	Ogfr.	Krämer, Ernst	KIA	9	Bf 109F-2	8847		Radinghem	8:30 PM	Spitfire
7/23/41	Uffz.	Barthel, Alfred	WIA	5	Bf 109E-7	4954		Manighem (BE)		Spitfire

24 July

Today the RAF's prime concern was shipping moving along the Channel and moored at Cherbourg and Brest. The latter two harbors were defended by I/JG 2, which saw its first major combat in some time. RAF attacks on ships at Ostend and in the Dover Straits were met by six German formations, the five resident Jagdgruppen plus the JG 26 Stabsschwarm. There were no German losses. JG 2 filed three claims for combats in the Channel area. JG 26 claimed four Spitfires and one Hurricane, spread evenly among its combat units: one to a Stab wingman for his first combat victory; two to the First Gruppe; one to the Second; and one to the Third.

25 July

A day of Alarmstarts and inconclusive engagements, save for one whose German participants have not been identified. G/C Harry Broadhurst, the Hornchurch station commander, led a flight of four Spitfires into France to “look for trouble”. They found it – Broadhurst's three companions were shot down by Bf 109s, probably from III/JG 26.

26 July

Oblt. Erwin Biedermann joined the Third Gruppe after a tour as a test pilot with Fieseler. Biedermann had previous combat experience in 1940 with JG 2.

27 July

Several RAF formations did not cross the French coast, but flew along the coastline looking for shipping. Several JG 26 Staffeln had been moved back to their alternate coastal bases for better defense against just such raids. At 1430 a 2nd Staffel formation scrambled from Audembert, while 8th Staffel aircraft took off from Le Touquet. Both engaged the enemy; the 2nd Staffel's Uffz. Fröhlich shot down a Hurricane off Gravelines.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 24–27 July 1941

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
7/24/41	Gefr.	Richter H.	Ge St	1	Spitfire	unknown	7:50 PM		yes
7/24/41	Oblt.	Priller	1 CO	44	Spitfire	7km NW of Dunkirk	2:45 PM		yes
7/24/41	Lt.	Dippel	2	2	Hurricane	15km NW of Calais	3:00 PM		yes
7/24/41	Hptm.	Adolph	II CO	22	Spitfire	Gravelines	2:55 PM		unk
7/24/41	Lt.	Beese	III St	1	Spitfire	unknown	2:38 PM		yes
7/27/41	Uffz.	Fröhlich	2	4	Hurricane	near Gravelines	2:38 PM		yes

29 July

Uffz. Adolf Glunz flew his first convoy escort mission as a member of 4/JG 26. It was uneventful. He took off from the small Staffel dispersal field at Mardyck and landed back at Maldeghem; the Second Gruppe's transfer to Moorsele was apparently not yet complete.

The 1st Staffel began its tour as the Führungsstaffel at Audembert; the 2nd Staffel returned to Clairmarais.

31 July

The results of the air offensive were reviewed by the RAF Command Staff in a meeting at the end of July. The Commander-in-Chief of Bomber Command was not convinced that the Circuses were accomplishing anything useful, and proposed to withdraw his few Stirlings from the daylight campaign. Fighter Command's Air Marshal Sholto Douglas argued that alone, his fighters could not hope to entice the enemy up to do battle. The Chief of the Air Staff's decision was to continue the Circuses, but without the Stirlings. No. 2 Group's Blenheims would continue to provide the strike force until that Group could replace them with more capable aircraft.

Chapter Eight

THE ARRIVAL OF THE FW 190

August – December 1941

1 August

Near this date Oblt. Otto Behrens' operational test squadron, Erprobungsstaffel 190, moved from the Luftwaffe's Rechlin test facility to the Paris airfield of Le Bourget to begin training the Second Gruppe on the FW 190A-1. The Focke-Wulf fighter had at last been cleared for service. Behrens' skills and enthusiasm are generally credited with saving the entire FW 190 program from cancellation. The problems Behrens and his men had overcome had been numerous and severe. Had the service testing been left up to men without a stake in the outcome, which was the usual procedure, the pilots of the Schlager Geschwader would have had to soldier on in their Bf 109s until the end of the war.

It was obvious from the first that Kurt Tank's compact little fighter had outstanding flying qualities and was solidly constructed. Nearly all of the airplane's problems centered around its new BMW 801 engine. Inadequate cooling, leaking oil and fuel lines, and runaway propellers could be alleviated by modest engineering changes. Other problems, such as failing connecting rods, were more fundamental, and were the result of Germany's shortage of the metals necessary to make true high-strength, high-temperature alloys. Unreliability would be the curse of the BMW 801 for its entire existence.

3 August

The RAF mounted small-scale shipping attacks and sweeps. Oblt. Schmid of the Geschwaderstab claimed a Spitfire in late afternoon. The 4th Staffel's Uffz. Glunz was credited with his first JG 26 combat flight after a late-evening Alarmstart from Moorseele. He probably engaged No. 11 Group's Kenley Wing, which was sweeping the Gravelines-St. Omer area at this time. These Spitfires may have been responsible for damaging a Second Gruppe Bf 109E-4 that force-landed near Calais.

5 August

Flights from the five Jafü 2 Jagdgruppen were scrambled against several RAF Rodeos, but combats were few. No JG 26 victory claims are known. A First Gruppe Bf 109F-4 crash-landed on Audembert after combat, and was written off with sixty per cent damage. Uffz. Glunz sortied twice from Mardyck, one of the Second Gruppe's dispersal fields, and received mission credit for one flight.

6 August

Fighter Command Spitfires flew a feint toward Le Touquet that brought a reaction from the 4th and 8th Staffeln, but resulted in no known claims or losses for either side. Uffz. Glunz's Alarmstart from Moorseele encountered enemy aircraft, which resulted in mission credit. Obfw. Martin's sortie from Le Touquet did not make contact.

7 August

The 6th Staffel began ferrying their FW 190A-1s from Le Bourget to Moorseele. Oblt. Walter Schneider, the Staffel Kapitän, flew a last early-morning patrol in his Bf 109E-7 and shot down a Spitfire over Deal, on the Kent coast. This was the first combat in what was to prove a busy day for the Schlager fighters.

Shortly after 1100 the entire Geschwader was scrambled to oppose a large RAF force reported leaving the English coast. This proved to be the six Blenheims and twelve fighter squadrons of Circus No. 67, bound for the St. Omer airfield complex. The formation overflew St. Omer from the south at 1118 and flew out over Calais at 1126. Obstlt. Galland's Stabsschwarm and Hptm. Seifert's First Gruppe attacked just past the target. As Galland was beginning his firing pass a Spitfire banked around on his tail. This was shot down by Oblt. Schmid from close range; Galland then downed his own target. Hptm. Seifert claimed a Spitfire near Gravelines. Oblt. Priller followed the formation out to sea before downing his Spitfire, and failed to obey the controller's 1129 order for all airborne fighters to fly to St. Omer to intercept a second formation. This was No. 12 Group's Digby Wing, which had been assigned to fly as target cover, but had arrived too late. The Germans had the altitude advantage and swung to the east before diving on the hapless formation out of the sun. One Hurricane and three Spitfires went down; no No. 12 Group pilot fired as much as a single shot in return. Oblt. Schmid and one pilot from each of the Gruppen filed claims. The Geschwader's eight claims match this Circus's losses; JG 2 filed no claims at this time. The only German casualty was the 8th Staffel's Lt. Hans-Joachim Luckhardt, who was wounded southeast of Guines. Uffz. Glunz's coolant began leaking as he returned from the battle, and he made a forced landing on Mardyck.

RAF fighters began crossing the French coast that afternoon at 1742, followed by six Blenheims at 1748. Once again the target was St. Omer. The German fighters had been airborne since about 1715 and formations from all five Jafü 2 Jagdgruppen, plus Galland's Stabsschwarm, made contact. Galland's target was the first to fall, followed closely by Schmid's. This was Schmid's third victory of the day. All were hit from behind at close range – down to thirty yards, according to his combat report – the method of attack preferred by Galland himself. Pilots from all five Gruppen claimed victories this evening. JG 26's claims totalled six; JG 2's, five. At some time during the day one First Gruppe and one JG 2 fighter made forced landings owing to combat damage. The only other damage reported resulted from forced landings made by two 6th Staffel FW 190s upon their arrival at Moorseele from Le Bourget.

The Ergänzungsgruppe sent the following pilots to the combat Gruppen this week: First Gruppe: Lt. Gottfried Helmholz, Uffz. Erich Scheyda, Ogfr. Albert Übel; Second Gruppe: Gefr. Reinhardt Braun, Fw. Karl Tripschu, Obfw. Willy Vierling; Third Gruppe: Uffz. Werner Korte. Uffz. Karl Kubilius joined the First Gruppe direct from flight training at Pütznitz.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 3–7 August 1941

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
8/3/41	Oblt.	Schmid	Ge St	12	Spitfire	unknown	6:32 PM		yes
8/7/41	Oblt.	Schmid	Ge St	13	Spitfire	Campagne	11:20 AM		unk
8/7/41	Obstlt.	Galland A.	Ge CO	74	Spitfire	Lumbres	11:23 AM		yes
8/7/41	Oblt.	Schmid	Ge St	14	Spitfire	SW of Calais	11:30 AM	19+401 Sqd	yes
8/7/41	Obstlt.	Galland A.	Ge CO	75	Spitfire	10km NW of St. Omer	5:40 PM		yes
8/7/41	Oblt.	Schmid	Ge St	15	Spitfire	St. Omer-Ardres	5:43 PM		yes
8/7/41	Hptm.	Seifert	I CO	16	Spitfire	near Gravelines	11:25 AM		unk
8/7/41	Oblt.	Priller	1 CO	45	Spitfire	5km NW of Calais	11:30 AM		yes
8/7/41	Oblt.	Priller	1 CO	46	Spitfire	8km W of Calais	6:20 PM		yes
8/7/41	Uffz.	Bohn	3	1	Spitfire	10km SE of Calais	11:30 AM	19+401 Sqd	yes
8/7/41	Oblt.	Koch	5	5	Spitfire	Guines	11:30 AM	19+401 Sqd	yes
8/7/41	Oblt.	Schneider W.	6 CO	15	Spitfire	Deal	8:30 AM		yes
8/7/41	Oblt.	Schneider W.	6 CO	16	Hurricane	Gravelines	6:05 PM		yes
8/7/41	Hptm.	Schöpfel	III CO	29	Spitfire	unknown	11:40 AM	19+401 Sqd	yes
8/7/41	Hptm.	Schöpfel	III CO	30	Spitfire	SW of Dunkirk	6:00 PM		yes
8/7/41	Oblt.	Haiböck	III CO	9	Spitfire	Hazebrouck/ Boulogne	6:05 PM		unk

9 August

Genmaj. Osterkamp's controllers began ordering their fighters into the air a little after 1100, upon receiving reports of a large formation leaving England. JG 2 was kept on the ground, but the JG 26 Stabsschwarm and all three of its Gruppen got up in good time, and reached attack position just as the bombers jettisoned their bombs near Gosnay. The Messerschmitts then made their usual slashing attacks out of the sun, through patchy clouds. The squadrons of the Kenley Wing split up after the first bounce, and the air between Béthune and the coast was filled with whirling fighters. Oblt. Schmid and his wingman, Uffz. Heinz Richter, shot down lone Spitfires from behind, at close range. Obstlt. Galland then fired on his own target from 110 yards down to twenty yards, and watched its pilot bail out. The three RAF pilots were probably from No. 452 Sqd., which lost three Spitfires under these circumstances.

The Tangmere Wing, flying ahead of the “beehive” as target support, was able to dive on a Gruppe of climbing Messerschmitts, apparently I/JG 26; Uffz. Albert Schlager bailed out over St. Omer, but his chute failed to open. The Second Gruppe then arrived on the scene, and the Spitfire pilots were soon being ordered by their leaders to make for the clouds and escape individually. One Second Gruppe aircraft crashed at Merville after its pilot had bailed out. The next pilot to go down was the Tangmere wing commander, the celebrated legless pilot Douglas Bader. Bader's story is well-known and it is unnecessary to recapitulate it here. The identity of his victor was so important to Bader at the time that Galland commented on the possibilities in his own memoirs. No definite identification can be made, but it was probably one of the two Second Gruppe pilots who claimed Spitfires in this combat, Lt. Wolfgang Kosse or Obfw. Walter Meyer. A third possibility is the 9th Staffel's Obfw. Erwin Busch, whose claim was made at the right time but in an unknown location.

P/O Lionel “Buck” Casson, a member of Bader's flight, was heading for the coast and had just joined up with a No. 616 Sqd. flight when he was spotted by Hptm. Gerhard Schöpfel. Schöpfel recalled:

“After my Gruppe had split up, I headed alone for my airfield at Ligescourt. Suddenly I saw . . . a flight of four Spitfires flying westward. I attacked them



The downing of W/C Douglas Bader by a JG 26 pilot on 9 August, and Bader's subsequent visit to Geschwader headquarters, were memorable events for all members of the unit. Photos by service photographers and bystanders were circulated freely among JG 26 members and found their way into a number of albums. Here Galland shows a Bf 109F to Bader; the interpreter is on the left. (Vasco)

from above and after a short burst of fire the rear machine nosed over sharply and dove away, while the other aircraft flew on unconcerned. I dove after the fleeing Spitfire, as I could see no sign of damage. The British pilot hugged the ground, dodging shrubs, trees, and houses. I was constantly in his prop-wash and could not aim properly. Because of the warm air near the ground my radiator flaps opened and my speed dropped off. It thus took a long time to obtain a good firing position. Finally I was positioned immediately behind the Spitfire, and it filled my gunsight. I pressed the firing knob for my cannon and machine guns, and – click. I had apparently exhausted my ammunition in the earlier air battles. Under no circumstances did I want to give up the chase. The British pilot had no way to know my condition and I wanted to strike terror in him for as long as he was over French soil. I thus stayed right behind him, at high speed. Suddenly, to my utter disbelief, I saw a white plume of smoke behind the Spitfire. The smoke grew more dense. The propeller soon came to a stop, and the pilot made a crash-landing in a field east of Marquise. I circled the aircraft, noted its markings (for the victory report), saw the pilot climb out, and waved at him. Just as German soldiers approached him, he was able to ignite a built-in explosive charge, which destroyed the center section of the aircraft . . . My ordnance officer found, to my astonishment, that the aircraft had taken but a single machine gun round in an engine cylinder during my first attack. Had I not pressed after the pilot and forced him to fly at top speed he would probably have reached England despite the damage.”

Casson's version of this combat matches Schöpfel's in every major detail, except that the RAF pilot recalls being boxed in and forced to ground level by an entire Schwarm of Bf 109s, rather than being pursued by only one.

The day's fighting for the Geschwader was by no means over. No. 11 Group sent a three-Wing Rodeo to Hardelot in mid-afternoon, and the Geschwader made another effective interception that resulted in claims for five more Spitfires, for no losses. Johannes Schmid downed two Spitfires, which when added to his morning victory gave him his second three-victory day in three days. One victorious pilot was Oblt. Karl Borris, who had joined the 6th Staffel upon his return from Le Bourget.

For the day JG 26 claimed fourteen Spitfires destroyed, of which eleven were confirmed; the anti-aircraft artillery claimed two. Fighter Command's pilots were credited with 18-12-9 Bf 109s, while losing 10-6 Spitfires. Among the notable RAF pilots credited with victories on this day were S/L J. E. Rankin and F/S D. E. Kingaby of No. 92 Sqd., F/L B. E. F. "Paddy" Finucane and P/O K. W. "Bluey" Truscott of No. 452 Sqd., and P/O J. E. "Johnnie" Johnson of No. 616 Sqd. After W/C Bader's return from POW camp he was credited with two victories by gunfire and a third by collision. The details in these famous pilots' memoirs and encounter reports do not match the known circumstances of any of Luftflotte 3's losses, which totalled two fighters, both from JG 26.

Obstlt. Galland's morning victory was gained in a Bf 109F-4 with the unique armament of one MG 151/20 and two cowl-mounted 12.7mm MG 131s. He felt so strongly that the Bf 109F was underarmed that he had the weaponry of three of his personal aircraft increased. He scored thirteen victories with these "specials". Two of them were armed as described above. The nose armament of the third was the standard MG 151/20 and two MG 17s – but it also carried



The remains of P/O Buck Casson's Spitfire, photographed by Gerhard Schöpfel after he shot it down on 9 August. (*Schöpfel*)

two MG FF cannon in the wings. This was the only F-model or later Bf 109 to enter combat with internal wing armament.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 9 August 1941

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
8/9/41	Oblt.	Schmid	Ge St	16	Spitfire	10km E of St. Omer	11:25 AM	452 Sqd	yes
8/9/41	Uffz.	Richter H.	Ge St		Spitfire	N of Dunkirk	11:30 AM	452 Sqd	no
8/9/41	Obstlt.	Galland A.	Ge CO	76	Spitfire	NW of St. Pol	11:32 AM	452 Sqd	yes
8/9/41	Obstlt.	Galland A.	Ge CO		Spitfire	N of Ardres	5:41 PM		no
8/9/41	Oblt.	Schmid	Ge St	17	Spitfire	near Gravelines	5:44 PM		yes
8/9/41	Oblt.	Schmid	Ge St	18	Spitfire	near Gravelines	5:45 PM		yes
8/9/41	Lt.	Schauder	3	3	Spitfire	15km N of Gravelines	5:56 PM		yes
8/9/41	Lt.	Kosse	5	9	Spitfire	St. Omer	11:45 AM	Tangmere Wing	yes
8/9/41	Obfw.	Meyer W.	6	11	Spitfire	St. Omer	11:25 AM	Tangmere Wing	yes
8/9/41	Lt.	Borris	6	7	Spitfire	Campagne	6:30 PM	403 Sqd	yes
8/9/41	Hptm.	Schöpfel	III CO	31	Spitfire	E of Marquise	11:45 AM	616 Sqd	yes
8/9/41	Hptm.	Schöpfel	III CO	32	Spitfire	unknown	5:59 PM		yes
8/9/41	Lt.	Biedermann	9	2	Spitfire	unknown			unk
8/9/41	Obfw.	Busch E.	9	6	Spitfire	unknown	11:25 AM		yes

JG 26 Casualties: 7–9 August 1941

Date	Rank	Name	Cas	Unit	Aircraft	WNr	Mkgs	Place	Time	Cause
8/7/41	Lt.	Luckhardt, Heinz	WIA	8	Bf 109F-4			30km SE of Guines	11:30 AM	unknown
8/9/41	Uffz.	Schlager, Albert	KIA	3	Bf 109F-4	8350		Aire-Hazebrouck	11:30 AM	Spitfire

10 August

Fighter Command’s routine feints and coastal sweeps resulted in the usual Alarmstarts by Jafü 2’s fighters, but no significant encounters. The day’s major combat took place over a German freighter that was nearing Gravelines. Three Blenheims took off from Manston at 1250, picked up their escort, and headed across the Dover Straits. The German fighters were waiting for them. The JG 26 Stabsschwarm took on the fighter escort, while 3rd Staffel aircraft went for the Blenheims. Two bombers went down; one was claimed by the naval escorts as well as the fighters. Oblt. Schmid shot down a No. 242 Sqd. Hurricane, which crashed in view of a flak ship. Over the next three minutes he claimed another Hurricane and a Spitfire, keeping his string of “hat tricks” going, but the latter two aircraft apparently returned safely. Schmid’s wingman Uffz. Richter also claimed a Spitfire. JG 26 losses were limited to one First Gruppe aircraft that crash-landed on Audembert with combat damage, and a Bf 109E-7 from the Ergänzungsgruppe that crash-landed on Waalhoven after its engine failed on what was classed as a combat mission.

12 August

Bomber Command planned and carried out a major daylight operation to Köln, supported by a variety of diversionary attacks. The heart of the mission was an attack by fifty-four Blenheims on two important power stations. Simultaneous Circuses were flown to St. Omer and Gosnay; today Hampdens rather than Blenheims served as their “bait”. Early penetrations resulted in one Spitfire claim by the Third Gruppe, while JG 2 claimed one Hurricane and one Spitfire.

JG 2 then devoted its attention to the Circuses, while JG 26's four combat units flew to Holland to intercept the returning Blenheims and their Spitfire withdrawal cover, which made rendezvous over the Scheldt Estuary. The Geschwader pilots attacked immediately, and believed that they had shot down five Blenheims and five Spitfires in the confused fighting in and out of low-altitude clouds. I/JG 1, flying from Holland, claimed two Blenheims; one of these claims was rejected and credited to III/JG 26. Blenheim losses for the day totalled twelve; the withdrawal cover apparently lost two Spitfires. The Bf 109F-4 of Lt. Hans Witzel, a member of the First Gruppe Stabsschwarm, was hit by a Blenheim over the Scheldt and Witzel was forced to land his aircraft at Antwerp. JG 2 was successful against the Circus escorts, claiming eight Spitfires over the Channel. Their battle was with the Kenley Wing, which lost five fighters.

The evening brought one more Circus, an attack by six Blenheims on the Le Trait shipyards. The Third Gruppe and JG 2 claimed a total of three fighters from the escort; one Spitfire failed to return to England.

The JG 26 Ergänzungsgruppe suffered a fatality when Fw. Georg Liebherr's Bf 109E-7 broke up in the air while on a training flight and crashed near Dixmuide.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 10–12 August 1941

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
8/10/41	Oblt.	Schmid	Ge St	19	Hurricane	N of Gravelines	1:00 PM	242 Sqd	yes 1
8/10/41	Oblt.	Schmid	Ge St	20	Hurricane	N of Gravelines	1:01 PM	242 Sqd	yes 1
8/10/41	Oblt.	Schmid	Ge St	21	Spitfire	N of Gravelines	1:03 PM		unk
8/10/41	Uffz.	Richter H.	Ge St	2	Spitfire	NW of Gravelines	1:05 PM		yes
8/10/41	Oblt.	Otte	3	4	Blenheim	2km N of a convoy	1:04 PM	226 Sqd	yes
8/10/41	Lt.	Schauder	3	4	Blenheim	8km N of a convoy	1:06 PM	226 Sqd	yes
8/12/41	Obstlt.	Galland A.	Ge CO	77	Spitfire	25km W of Vlissingen	1:12 PM	19+152 Sqd	unk
8/12/41	Obstlt.	Galland A.	Ge CO	78	Blenheim	W Haamstede Scheldt Estuary	1:18 PM		yes
8/12/41	Oblt.	Schmid	Ge St	22	Spitfire	NW of Vlissingen – in sea	1:22 PM	19+152 Sqd	unk
8/12/41	Oblt.	Holtey v.	Ge St	2	Blenheim	S of Vlissingen – in sea	1:28 PM		unk
8/12/41	Lt.	Witzel	I St	13	Spitfire	NW of Ijzendijke	12:55 PM	19+152 Sqd	unk
8/12/41	Lt.	Witzel	I St	14	Spitfire	Groede (30km NW Westcapelle)	12:56 PM	19+152 Sqd	yes
8/12/41	Hptm.	Seifert	I CO	17	Blenheim	SE of Vlissingen	1:00 PM		yes
8/12/41	Oblt.	Eickhoff	2 CO	4	Blenheim	Scheldt Estuary	12:55 PM		yes
8/12/41	Fw.	Babenz	3	4	Spitfire	S of Goeree Is. (NL)	1:20 PM	19+152 Sqd	yes
8/12/41	Lt.	Beese	III St	2	Spitfire	unknown	11:50 AM		yes
8/12/41		III. Stab	III St	1	Spitfire	unknown	8:03 PM	485 Sqd	yes
8/12/41	Oblt.	Ruppert K.	9 CO	7	Blenheim	20km NW of Walcheren	1:20 PM		unk

JG 26 Casualties: 12 August 1941

Date	Rank	Name	Cas	Unit	Aircraft	WNr	Mkgs	Place	Time	Cause
8/12/41	Fw.	Liebherr, Georg	KIFA	2/E	Bf 109E-4	839		Dixmuiden/Wevelgheim		engine
8/12/41	Lt.	Witzel, Hans-karl	WIA	I St	Bf 109F-4	8345		Scheldt Est.	12:55 PM	Blenheim

14 August

A morning Rodeo prompted the Jafü to scramble several German units, but no combat resulted. During mid-afternoon's Circus No. 72 eleven Blenheims bombed the E-boat base at Boulogne. A coastal raid such as this one usually

gave the Germans very little time to gain position for an effective attack, but the Tangmere Wing, flying return high cover, was so badly split up and out of formation that the 4th Staffel was able to attack it from beneath. The Bf 109E-7 pilots brought down two Spitfires, and were themselves untouched. Later in the day Circus No. 73 sent six Blenheims to bomb the artillery shell factory at Marquise. The pilots of the Northolt Wing (Polish) saw the Third Gruppe beneath them, still climbing for altitude, and dove to the attack. Two Messerschmitts went down, Uffz. Heinrich Holzenkämpfer being killed and Ogfr. Heinrich Wälter bailing out with injuries. As the battle moved back over the coast, part of the First Gruppe arrived, as did the 6th Staffel in their new Focke-Wulfs. Two 6th Staffel pilots claimed Spitfires; the First Gruppe, the Third Gruppe, and JG 2 each claimed one, for no losses. All of the evening's combats were with the Northolt Wing, which claimed 13-2-4 Messerschmitts for the loss of four pilots.

Oblt. Hans-Jürgen Westphal, the 8th Staffel Kapitän, and his deputy, Lt. Kurt Kranefeld, were injured in a Lille motor vehicle accident, removing them from combat for a while.

16 August

A sweep of the coast from Dunkirk to Gravelines by two No. 11 Group wings was met by Hptm. Adolph, leading a mixed formation of Second Gruppe FW 190A-1s and Bf 109E-7s. The Germans claimed four Spitfires; one RAF loss can be verified.

In early afternoon Circus No. 74 targeted the airfield at Marquise. The forward support wing's sweep brought the First and Third Gruppen up early, and they missed the main force. JG 2 made an interception during the RAF's withdrawal and claimed three Spitfires, but lost three pilots; Fighter Command apparently lost two Spitfires in this battle.

A third major RAF incursion brought the three JG 26 Gruppen and JG 2 up again at 1900 hours. Circus No. 75's target was one of the St. Omer airfields. Hptm. Adolph claimed one fighter, and JG 2's pilots claimed four; one RAF loss is known. At 1930 Lt. Josef Heyarts of the First Gruppe Stab, flying as Hptm. Seifert's wingman, attacked a single Spitfire at 30,000 feet over Le Touquet. After a long lone dogfight Heyart's aircraft was hit; he bailed out, but his harness had burned through, and he fell to his death northeast of Wissant. Two German aircraft were damaged in combat at unknown times: a JG 2 Bf 109F was destroyed in its crash-landing near Calais, and a Second Gruppe Bf 109E-7 sustained slight damage in a belly-landing on Moorsele.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 14-16 August 1941

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
8/14/41	Lt.	Unzeitig	1	5	Spitfire	mid-Channel N of Gravelines	6:40 PM	306+308 Sqd	unk
8/14/41	Oblt.	Seegatz	4	14	Spitfire	Audruicq	3:45 PM	41+616 Sqd	yes
8/14/41		4. Staffel	4	1	Spitfire	Ardres	3:50 PM	41+616 Sqd	yes
8/14/41	Lt.	Schenk	6	1	Spitfire	Loon Plage	6:30 PM	306+308 Sqd	yes
8/14/41	Oblt.	Schneider W.	6 CO	17	Spitfire	Dunkirk	6:37 PM	306+308 Sqd	yes
8/14/41	Lt.	Biedermann	9	3	Spitfire	unknown	6:35 PM	306+308 Sqd	yes
8/16/41	Hptm.	Adolph	II CO	24	Spitfire	20km NW of Boulogne	9:30 AM	602 Sqd	yes
8/16/41	Hptm.	Adolph	II CO	23	Spitfire	8km N of Marquise	7:30 PM	609 Sqd	unk
8/16/41	Lt.	Sternberg	5	2	Spitfire	Dunkirk	9:28 AM	602 Sqd	yes
8/16/41	Oblt.	Koch	5	6	Spitfire	E of Gravelines	9:30 AM	602 Sqd	yes
8/16/41	Fw.	Mackenstedt	6	1	Spitfire	Gravelines	9:25 AM	602 Sqd	yes

JG 26 Casualties: 14-16 August 1941

Date	Rank	Name	Cas	Unit	Aircraft	WNr	Mkgs	Place	Time	Cause
8/14/41	Uffz.	Holzenkämpfer, Heinrich	KIA	8	Bf 109F-4	7101		St. Omer/ SE of Wisques	6:15 PM	Spitfire
8/14/41	Lt.	Kranefeld, Kurt	WAC	8	none			Lille		vehicle
8/14/41	Oblt.	Westphal, Hans-Jürgen	WAC	8 CO	none			Lille		vehicle
8/14/41	Uffz.	Wälter, Heinrich	WIA	III St	Bf 109F-4	7126		St Omer		Spitfire
8/16/41	Lt.	Heyarts, Josef	KIA	I St	Bf 109F-4	8368		Le Touquet/ NE of Wissant	7:30 PM	Spitfire

17 August

JG 26 aircraft spent the day on uneventful patrols and convoy escorts. Some contacts were made, but no claims or losses resulted. A First Gruppe Bf 109F-4's landing gear collapsed while landing on Audembert after a combat mission. JG 2 intercepted a Roadstead mission at 2030 and claimed four Hurricanes, but lost three Bf 109F-2s; two pilots were killed and the third was injured.

Fw. Walter Matoni reported to the Second Gruppe from III/JG 27. Matoni had joined JG 27 in mid-1940 and had four victories to his credit; his transfer was undoubtedly a result of Obstlt. Galland's continuing pleas for experienced replacements.

18 August

Again today JG 26's patrols were uneventful. JG 2 claimed five victories in two separate engagements, and sustained no losses.

Lt. Ulrich Dzialas arrived from the Ergänzungsgruppe, and was assigned to the Third Gruppe.

19 August

This was a day of considerable aerial activity, despite continuous cloud cover at 8-10,000 feet with large masses of cumulus up to 20,000 feet and storm clouds over the Calais area. A Fighter Command Rodeo to St. Omer at 1000 hours caused a number of units to scramble, but apparently no combat took place. A large RAF build-up at 1135 proved to be Circus No. 81, or "Operation Leg", during which a Blenheim dropped a spare set of W/C Bader's artificial legs on St. Omer under the cover of an abortive bombing raid on Béthune. The JG 26 Stabsschwarm and First Gruppe intercepted the Kenley Wing (flying escort cover) near Dunkirk and shot down two Spitfires. Oblt. Schmid also claimed a Blenheim, but his claim was never confirmed, and none was, in fact, lost. The 3rd Staffel's Ogfr. Alois Krieger was hit in this engagement, and he crashed into the Channel. Pilots of the Hornchurch Wing, flying as target support, saw the slow-climbing Bf 109E-7s of the Second Gruppe beneath them and attacked with the sun at their backs, sending two 5th Staffel Messerschmitts down to crash at Steenvoorde. Gefr. Reinhardt Braun, who was on his first combat mission, died in his aircraft; Fw. Franz Schwaiger bailed out, but attempted to open his parachute while falling too fast. His harness ripped, throwing Schwaiger free to fall to his death. In the subsequent general combat one No. 401 Sqd. Spitfire was damaged. Its pilot succeeded in reaching the Channel before bailing out, and he was rescued by the RAF ASR service. JG 2 claimed nine Spitfires from Circus No. 81, but the circumstances are unknown. Fighter Command lost a total of four pilots and seven Spitfires.

RAF aircraft were reported southwest of Flushing at 1714, resulting in Alarmstarts by at least two Gruppen, but the contact disappeared, and the Germans were soon recalled. A formation reported at 1908 proved to be Circus No. 82, a raid on the Hazebrouck motor yards by six Blenheims. After much maneuvering to avoid the leading target support wings, all of JG 26's formations were able to make interceptions, as did at least one JG 2 Gruppe. The Stabsschwarm and the First Gruppe wreaked havoc on the North Weald Wing, flying close escort, but a head-on attack was unable to damage the bombers. Galland's first attack downed one Spitfire northeast of St. Omer, and four more British escorts went down before 1958 hours, when the Germans were finally recalled from over the Channel. Oblt. Schmid's victim was from No. 222 Sqd.; its squadron markings are given in Schmid's report, which also states that its pilot had fled the crash site. The Czech pilot evaded capture and eventually made it back to England.

On the return flight the Northolt Wing (Polish) had several engagements with small groups of Bf 109s and lost three Spitfires. The 6th Staffel's Obfw. Willy Vierling crashed from high altitude north of Cassel, the victim of either a British fighter or oxygen starvation. Vierling was in a Bf 109E-7; the Staffel's conversion to the FW 190 was not yet complete. JG 2 claimed one Spitfire from this Circus. Two of its Bf 109s sustained slight combat damage at unspecified times. Fighter Command lost eight fighters, in exact agreement on this occasion with Luftwaffe claims.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 19 August 1941

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
8/19/41	Obstlt.	Galland A.	Ge CO	79	Spitfire	Bergues	11:55 AM	452+485 Sqd	unk
8/19/41	Oblt.	Schmid	Ge St	23	Blenheim	NW of Dunkirk	12:25 PM	18 Sqd	no
8/19/41	Obstlt.	Galland A.	Ge CO	80	Spitfire	NW of St Omer	7:32 PM	111 Sqd	yes
8/19/41	Obstlt.	Galland A.	Ge CO	81	Hurricane	SE of Gravelines	7:45 PM	71 Sqd	yes
8/19/41	Oblt.	Schmid	Ge St	24	Spitfire	E of St. Omer	7:55 PM	222 Sqd	yes
8/19/41	Hptm.	Seifert	I CO	18	Spitfire	near Gravelines	11:45 AM	452+485 Sqd	unk
8/19/41	Hptm.	Seifert	I CO	19	Spitfire	near Cassel	7:40 PM	111 Sqd	yes
8/19/41	Lt.	Dippel	2	3	Spitfire	near Gravelines	7:40 PM	111 Sqd	yes
8/19/41	Lt.	Schauder	3	5	Spitfire	NE of Gravelines	7:41 PM	111 Sqd	yes
8/19/41	Oblt.	Koch	5	7	Spitfire	Wormhout	12:00 PM	403 Sqd	yes
8/19/41	Lt.	Sternberg	5	3	Spitfire	N of Dunkirk	7:44 PM	308+315 Sqd	yes

JG 26 Casualties: 19 August 1941

Date	Rank	Name	Cas	Unit	Aircraft	WNr	Mkgs	Place	Time	Cause
8/19/41	Ogfr.	Krieger, Alois	KIA	2	Bf 109F-4	8363		Channel		fighter
8/19/41	Gefr.	Braun, Reinhardt	KIA	5	Bf 109E-7	3729		Poperinghe/ Steenvoorde	2:00 PM	Spitfire
8/19/41	Fw.	Schwaiger, Franz	KIA	5	Bf 109E-7	6520		Poperinghe/ Steenvoorde	2:00 PM	Spitfire
8/19/41	Obfw.	Vierling, Willy	KIA	6	Bf 109E-7	4215		N of Cassel		Spitfire

20 August

This was a day of routine Alarmstarts and patrols for JG 26. JG 2 claimed two Spitfires in two engagements, and sustained no losses.

21 August

A large flight of aircraft approaching Boulogne at 1000 was correctly judged by

the Le Touquet controllers as the precursors of a bombing raid, and they scrambled all three JG 26 Gruppen and part of JG 2. The German fighters had reached attack position by the time the main force crossed the coast at 1022, and began dive-and-recover attacks on exposed parts of the RAF formations. JG 26 claimed four Spitfires from Circus No. 83, as did JG 2. Fighter Command lost 6-2 Spitfires. The six Blenheims failed to find their target, the Chocques chemical plant.

The RAF attempted another raid on Chocques in mid-afternoon. The Jafü scrambled the same units, and again they were able to gain height and make effective attacks from the clouds scattered between 19,000 and 28,000 feet. No. 610 Squadron of the target support wing was just turning near Hazebrouck to join the main force when Oblt. Ebersberger's 4th Staffel Schwarm struck it from the clouds. The British squadron leader's section got separated, and only two of its six Spitfires made it back to England. P/O Tony Gaze, a blunt Australian, was one of the two survivors, and commented succinctly in his logbook, "very frightened!" JG 26 claimed a total of six Circus No. 84 Spitfires; JG 2 claimed eight. Fighter Command lost nine.

The two Geschwader each lost one pilot at unspecified times. The 6th Staffel's Fw. Adolf Garbe attempted to bail out over Desvres, but his parachute caught on his aircraft's tail and he died in the crash. It is worth noting that Garbe was flying a Bf 109F-2, a new fighter type for the Gruppe and especially for his 6th Staffel. The first Staffel to receive FW 190s, it was now flying Bf 109Es, Bf 109Fs, and FW 190As. Two Second Gruppe fighters made forced landings with combat damage; one was piloted by Addi Glunz, who landed his Bf 109E-7 on St. Omer at 1056. The 6th Staffel sustained its first loss of a Focke-Wulf fighter on this day. Obfw. Walter Meyer crash-landed his FW 190A-1 at Overheluestraat after its engine failed. He was pulled from the wreckage by two Belgian farmers and sent to the Courtrai hospital.

Johannes Schmid was awarded the Knight's Cross for his twenty-four aerial victories. He was promoted to Hauptmann and replaced the injured Oblt. Westphal as Kapitän of the 8th Staffel.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 21 August 1941

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
8/21/41	Lt.	Aistleitner	1	4	Spitfire	N of Calais	10:30 AM		unk
8/21/41	Lt.	Unzeitig	1	6	Spitfire	10km S of Boulogne	3:20 PM		yes
8/21/41	Fw.	Babenz	3	5	Spitfire	SE of Dunkirk	3:10 PM		yes
8/21/41	Oblt.	Ebersberger	4 CO	11	Spitfire	Merville	3:00 PM	610 Sqd	yes
8/21/41	Oblt.	Mätzke	4	2	Spitfire	Hazebrouck	2:55 PM	610 Sqd	yes
8/21/41	Obfw.	Roth	4	11	Spitfire	Capelle	2:58 PM	610 Sqd	yes
8/21/41	Lt.	Sternberg	5	4	Spitfire	Wormhout	10:30 AM		yes
8/21/41	Hptm.	Schöpfel	III CO	33	Spitfire	unknown	10:18 AM		yes
8/21/41	Oblt.	Ruppert K.	9 CO	8	Spitfire	unknown	10:25 AM		yes
8/21/41	Lt.	Naumann	9	4	Spitfire	unknown	3:10 PM		yes

JG 26 Casualties: 21 August 1941

Date	Rank	Name	Cas	Unit	Aircraft	WNr	Mkgs	Place	Time	Cause
8/21/41	Fw.	Garbe, Adolf	KIA	6	Bf 109F-2	5783		Boulogne/Desvres		fighter
8/21/41	Obfw.	Meyer, Walter	WIFA	6	FW 190A-1	002	br 2	Moorseele		engine

22 August

The Third Gruppe made several fruitless Alarmstarts. After one of them a Bf 109F-4 hit an obstruction while landing at Lille and was totally destroyed; the pilot was uninjured.

25 August

A First Gruppe Bf 109F-4 crash-landed on Clairmarais with serious damage after a combat mission; no more information is available.

26 August

A late-evening raid on the St. Omer satellite field at Wizernes was intercepted by the Second and Third Gruppen and units from JG 2. Hptm. Schmid's 8th Staffel reached the bombers, and he claimed one, but it reached England in damaged condition. Oblt. Müncheberg shot down a Spitfire into the Dover Straits on his first sortie since returning to France from North Africa. JG 2 claimed four Spitfires; Fighter Command lost two. The Germans sustained no casualties or damage.

27 August

Fighter Command planned two operations for the morning. Circus No. 85 to St. Omer was to serve as a diversion for Circus No. 86's deeper penetration to the Lille power station. But Circus No. 86's Blenheims failed to find their escort despite good weather and aborted, leaving a number of unattached RAF fighters wandering about northern France. From 0740 to 0950 Jafü 2 juggled with its own airborne fighter units. Apparently JG 26's three Gruppen intercepted the earlier Circus, while JG 2 units attacked units of the later one. JG 26 claimed seven Spitfires. One successful pilot was Addi Glunz, who claimed his sixth victory overall, and his first with JG 26. An Ergänzungsgruppe Bf 109E-7 crashed near Middelburg on what was classified as a combat sortie, and a Third Gruppe Bf 109F-4 was shot down and crashed near Desvres; neither of these pilots was injured. JG 2 claimed two Spitfires and one Hurricane, and sustained no losses.

29 August

An early-morning Circus to Hazebrouck was met by the Second and Third Gruppen and units of JG 2. JG 26 claimed a total of three Spitfires. Lt. Kosse led the 4th Staffel in an attack on No. 72 Squadron over St. Omer that downed one Spitfire but cost the life of Uffz. Werner Hetzel, who crashed near Hazebrouck. Oblt. Müncheberg followed the withdrawing formation over the Channel and shot down one Spitfire. JG 2 claimed four Spitfires at this time and location, but one of its claims was ultimately awarded to Müncheberg.

The Second Gruppe was introducing its FW 190s to combat slowly and cautiously. Their BMW 801C-1 engines were still giving problems. The unit's safety record was excellent, however: no pilots were killed in non-operational accidents during the break-in period, and only one was injured. Today brought the first Focke-Wulf combat fatality – and it was the result of German antiaircraft fire. After battling Spitfires the 6th Staffel's Lt. Heinz Schenk was hit by the Dunkirk flak and crashed on the beach south of the town.

Obfw. Kurt Görbig, an ex-infantryman who had won the Iron Cross in Poland, arrived from the Ergänzungsgruppe and joined the 6th Staffel, where he began his transition training on the FW 190.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 26–29 August 1941

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
8/26/41	Oblt.	Müncheberg	7 CO	49	Spitfire	2km N of Gravelines	7:30 PM		yes
8/26/41	Hptm.	Schmid	8 CO	25	Blenheim	unknown	7:40 PM		yes
8/27/41	Fw.	Babenz	3	6	Spitfire	W of Gravelines	8:10 AM		yes
8/27/41	Uffz.	Glunz	4	6	Spitfire	Bergues	8:25 AM		yes
8/27/41	Obfw.	Martin	8	6	Spitfire	unknown	8:10 AM		yes
8/27/41	Gefr.	Dirksen	8	1	Spitfire	unknown	8:12 AM		yes
8/27/41	Hptm.	Schmid	8 CO	26	Spitfire	25km N of Calais	8:30 AM		unk
8/27/41	Obfw.	Koslowski	9	10	Spitfire	unknown	8:15 AM		yes
8/27/41	Oblt.	Ruppert K.	9 CO	9	Spitfire	unknown	8:20 AM		yes
8/29/41	Oblt.	Seegatz	4	15	Spitfire	Nieuport	8:34 AM	72 Sqd	yes
8/29/41	Oblt.	Müncheberg	7 CO	50	Spitfire	10km NE of Dunkirk	8:40 AM		yes
8/29/41	Oblt.	Meyer	8	3	Spitfire	unknown	8:30 AM		yes

30 August

Feldmarschall Sperrle and Obstlt. Galland inspected the Second Gruppe at Moorseele.

Lt. Peter Göring was injured in the crash-landing of his *Ergänzungsgruppe* Bf 109E-7 near Hazebrouck on what was credited as a combat sortie. The crash was attributed to pilot error; the career of Peter Göring, a nephew of the Reichsmarschall, did not suffer noticeably as a result.

JG 26 Casualties: 27–30 August 1941

Date	Rank	Name	Cas	Unit	Aircraft	WNr	Mkgs	Place	Time	Cause
8/27/41	Ogfr.	Zach, Otto	no	E	Bf 109E-4	2767		Middelburg		crashed
8/29/41	Uffz.	Hetzel, Werner	KIA	4	Bf 109E-7	6463		E of Hazebrouck		fighter
8/29/41	Lt.	Schenk, Heinz	KIA	6	FW 190A-1	008		S of Dunkirk		own flak
8/30/41	Lt.	Göring, Peter	WIFA	E	Bf 109E-7	3787		Hazebrouck		crashed

31 August

A First Gruppe Bf 109F-2 came too close to a German convoy during a morning patrol and was hit by anti-aircraft fire, prompting a belly-landing on Calais-Marck. The Third Gruppe was scrambled from Ligescourt at 1315 to intercept the day's Circus, and made contact, but filed no claims. A 6th Staffel FW 190 aborted a mission with a bad engine, and sustained more damage in its forced landing on Mardyck. Most of the fighting around the Circus involved JG 2, which claimed three Spitfires.

During August Fighter Command lost ninety-eight Spitfires and ten Hurricanes in combat. JG 2 and JG 26 lost thirty Bf 109s and FW 190s to all causes. The war of attrition was not going exactly as the RAF's commanders had planned. JG 26's leading scorers at the end of August were Adolf Galland, with eighty-one victories; Joachim Müncheberg, who had fifty; and Josef Priller, with forty-six.

1 September

Fw. Otto Görtz and Uffz. Erich Jauer reported in from the *Ergänzungsgruppe* on this day and were assigned to the 5th Staffel, where they would continue to fly their familiar Bf 109Es for a few weeks before converting to the FW 190. Other pilots joining the combat Gruppen from the *Ergänzungsgruppe* during September included: Stab: Lt. Peter Göring; First Gruppe: Uffz. Franz Hiller, Lt. Wolfgang Ruhdel; Second Gruppe: Uffz. Willy Schöbel, Uffz. Josel Sieker, Ogfr. Gerhard Vogt; Third Gruppe: Uffz. Alfred Dovnar, Uffz. Georg Pistor.

2 September

Aircraft of the various Gruppen took their turns in escorting a tanker through the Dover Straits. At noon the convoy was off Ostend, and a Rotte from the Ergänzungsgruppe was assigned the routine task, only to encounter three Blenheims that had been sent to bomb the tanker. According to British records it was set on fire. The two Messerschmitts began an attack on a Blenheim that was withdrawing alone, and were spotted by a section of Spitfires from the escort. The Australian pilots of No. 452 Squadron shot Uffz. Karl Sucker into the sea, and claimed his Rottenführer, who escaped, as well.

Earlier in the day the Ergänzungsgruppe lost a Bf 109E that crashed into the Scheldt after its engine failed. Uffz. Herbert Contzen bailed out and was rescued.

3 September

The Ergänzungsgruppe lost another pilot when the wing of Ogfr. Helmut Göppner's Messerschmitt hit the Channel during a turn. Göppner flew on, but then disappeared. His body washed ashore on North Beveland; he had been on his first combat patrol.

The 4th Staffel took its turn at Le Bourget for conversion training on the FW 190. Uffz. Glunz made his first flight in the Focke-Wulf fighter.

4 September

In the evening Circus No. 93 targeted the Mazingarbe ammonia plant. All of JG 26's combat units, plus JG 2, made the interception. Obstlt. Galland burst through the close escort and flamed a Blenheim from a range of fifty yards. Pilots of the First and Third Gruppen claimed nine Spitfires. Uffz. Jauer flew



The First Gruppe awaits the word to taxi out from their dispersals for a mission – Clairmarais, September. (*Dietze via Meyer*)

his first combat sortie. He complained in his diary that his 5th Staffel, still flying Bf 109E “Emils”, was “as usual too late”, but his Second Gruppe comrades in FW 190s fared no better – contact was made, but no claims resulted. The only combat-related loss for the Geschwader was a FW 190 landing gear damaged in a hard landing on Moorsele. JG 2 claimed three Spitfires and sustained no losses. No. 2 Group lost the one Blenheim, and Fighter Command lost 7-3 Spitfires.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 4 September 1941

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
9/4/41	Obstlt.	Galland A.	Ge CO	82	Blenheim	N of St. Omer	5:19 PM	18 Sqd	yes
9/4/41	Oblt.	Priller	1 CO	47	Spitfire	NW of Béthune	5:30 PM		yes
9/4/41	Oblt.	Müncheberg	7 CO	51	Spitfire	Vollezele	5:26 PM		yes
9/4/41	Oblt.	Müncheberg	7 CO	52	Spitfire	Zeggens	5:29 PM		yes
9/4/41	Hptm.	Schmid	8 CO	27	Spitfire	unknown	5:20 PM		yes
9/4/41	Uffz.	Weber	8	1	Spitfire	unknown	5:25 PM		yes
9/4/41	Lt.	Galland P.	8	2	Spitfire	unknown	5:30 PM		yes
9/4/41	Hptm.	Schmid	8 CO	28	Spitfire	unknown	5:35 PM		yes
9/4/41	Hptm.	Schmid	8 CO	29	Spitfire	unknown	5:50 PM		yes
9/4/41	Oblt.	Ruppert K.	9 CO	10	Spitfire	Hesdin-Licques	5:43 PM		unk

5 September

Ergänzungsgruppe trainees Georg Pistor and Wolfgang Schaefer collided over Moorsele at 10,000 feet. Pistor nursed his airplane back to Wevelghem and landed it; Schaefer bailed out and hit the ground with injuries.

7 September

A Fighter Command Rodeo and several Rhubarbs led Jafü 2 to scramble the JG 26 Stabsschwarm and all three Gruppen beginning at 1655. Uffz. Dietze's 2nd Staffel Bf 109F-2 quickly became unflyable, and he had to bail out near Lumbres. Aircraft from every airborne unit succeeded in contacting a single RAF squadron that was flying a low-altitude Rhubarb. One Second Gruppe Bf 109E-7 had to crash-land near Tournay with combat damage, but three Spitfires



A Rotte of 2nd Staffel Bf 109Fs taxi to the take-off point – Clairmarais, September. (*Dietze via Meyer*)

from No. 71 (Eagle) Squadron went down. Six JG 26 pilots, including Obstlt. Galland, claimed them – obviously this was a case of too many aircraft chasing too few targets.

Uffz. Glunz returned from Le Bourget in a new FW 190A-1, and made a familiarization flight from Moorsele later in the day.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 7 September 1941

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
9/7/41	Obstlt.	Galland A.	Ge CO	83	Spitfire	20km W of Boulogne	5:19 PM	71 Sqd	yes
9/7/41	Uffz.	Schick	1	1	Spitfire	mid-Channel		71 Sqd	unk
9/7/41	Uffz.	Bohn	3	2	Spitfire	10km SE of Boulogne	5:20 PM	71 Sqd	yes
9/7/41	Fw.	Leibold	3	4	Spitfire	20km E of Folkestone	5:38 PM	71 Sqd	yes
9/7/41	Oblt.	Müncheberg	7 CO	53	Spitfire	NW of Montreuil	5:22 PM	71 Sqd	yes
9/7/41	Hptm.	Schmid	8 CO	30	Spitfire	unknown	5:20 PM	71 Sqd	yes

JG 26 Casualties: 2–7 September 1941

Date	Rank	Name	Cas	Unit	Aircraft	WNr	Mkgs	Place	Time	Cause
9/2/41	Uffz.	Sucker, Karl	KIA	2/E	Bf 109E-7	6145		NE of Ostend	12:00 PM	combat
9/2/41	Uffz.	Contzen, Herbert	no	E	Bf 109E-7	3633		Scheldt near Oostkapelle		engine
9/3/41	Ogfr.	Göppner, Helmut	KIFA	2/E	Bf 109E-4	1544		Channel/ N of Goeree Is.		hit water
9/5/41	Gefr.	Schaefer, Wolfgang	no	E	Bf 109E-7	913		Moorsele		collision
9/7/41	Uffz.	Dietze, Gottfried	no	2	Bf 109F-4	7190	bk 7	near Lumbres	5:45 PM	non-op crash

8 September

Uffz. Glunz took one of the 4th Staffel’s old Bf 109E-7s and joined the 5th Staffel’s Uffz. Jauer on a morning escort for two destroyers that were passing through the Straits. The flight was uneventful. A Second Gruppe Bf 109E-7 belly-landed near Lille after a combat sortie; further details are unknown. Later in the morning Glunz squeezed in another FW 190 training flight; flying then apparently stopped for several days.

11 September

The Geschwader saw little activity. A Third Gruppe Bf 109F-4 belly-landed near Hesdin while on a combat flight; damage was characterized as moderate. Uffz. Jauer flew a Klemm Kl 35 to his home town of Nordhorn, and the next day flew on to Rheine for a week’s stay. His diary does not state the reason, but it was possibly for training on the FW 190. Erprobungsstaffel 190 was due to be disbanded, although Le Bourget would continue to see some use for conversion training.

13 September

The 7th Staffel’s Lt. Theo Lindemann arrived at Ligescourt from North Africa; it can be assumed that the rest of the Staffel’s pilots returned at about this time. Lindemann flew several touch-and-goes during the day to familiarize himself with the Bf 109F.

16 September

The First and Third Gruppen were scrambled shortly after 1900 hours to intercept an approaching RAF formation that proved to contain only fighters. They were from the Northolt Wing (Polish), flying a Rodeo. The First Gruppe made contact, but filed no claims. Oblt. Müncheberg's 7th Staffel engaged the Polish fighters east of Boulogne, and Müncheberg sent one down to earth; the Messerschmitt of Müncheberg's friend Lindemann was slightly damaged. The Polish squadrons lost two Spitfires; JG 2 claimed the second.

17 September

The day's effort by the RAF was the largest Circus operation yet. Circus No. 95 sent twenty-four Blenheims to the Mazingarbe power station; Circus No. 96 dispatched six Hampdens to the Shell Oil plant at Marquise. The escort force comprised a total of forty-three Spitfire squadrons. The German controllers seemed to have little trouble distinguishing the main forces from the various cover wings, but the mass of RAF aircraft kept the interceptors from reaching the bombers. The close escort wings bore the brunt of the attacks. JG 26 and one JG 2 Gruppe were scrambled at 1515 versus the Mazingarbe force, which entered French airspace at 1531. Hptm. Seifert's First Gruppe Stabsschwarm was attacked by Spitfires out of the sun over Lille, and lost two aircraft: Lt. Hans Witzel's was hit in the fuel tank and exploded, while Oblt. Karl Dominikus was able to bail out of his crippled Messerschmitt without injury. Seifert was able to shoot down one Spitfire, and his three Staffeln downed five more, but the 3rd Staffel's Lt. Wolfgang Ruhdel was shot down over Calais-Marck and crashed in his plane. The 4th Staffel's Kapitän, Oblt. Kurt Ebersberger, flying his Staffel's first FW 190 mission, scored the Second Gruppe's only victory. The Third Gruppe battled the Northolt Wing (Polish) between St. Omer and Boulogne. Obfw. Martin collided with a No. 308 Sqd. Spitfire, and he bailed out with injuries that kept him out of combat for the rest of the year. Another Polish Spitfire was shot down by a Gruppe pilot. JG 2 claimed one Spitfire, and sustained no losses. All airborne German fighters were recalled at 1611. Luftwaffe claims totalled ten Spitfires; Fighter Command's losses were 8-2.

No. 403 Squadron was assigned the mission of escorting the RAF's rescue launches in their search for ditched pilots in the Channel. Their presence was noted by the German controllers, who sent an unidentified Staffel after them. No fighters were shot down, although the Canadians claimed 2-1-9. A German pilot was overheard by the British radio intercept operators announcing that he had "shot at" a Spitfire, but the details are unknown.

The German fighter pilots apparently had little warning of the evening raid on Marquise – the 4th Staffel scrambled at 1837, while the Hampdens crossed the coast at 1844 – and successes were few. The Third Gruppe lost two fighters: the 9th Staffel's Oblt. Erwin Biedermann was attacked over Calais by two Spitfires and was lost in the Channel, and another Gruppe pilot bailed out over St. Omer. The 6th Staffel's Focke-Wulfs pursued the retiring RAF force over the Channel, and just before their recall at 1908 hours downed one Spitfire, for the Geschwader's only victory. JG 2 claimed three Spitfires, and suffered no losses. Fighter Command lost 3-1 Spitfires.



Hptm. Johannes Seifert, First Gruppe Kommandeur, meets with a group of 2nd Staffel pilots. From left: Uffz. Gottfried Dietze, Lt. Hans-Karl Witzel (KIA 17 Sep 41), Uffz. Hans-Günther Adam (KIA 20 Dec 42), Hptm. Seifert (KIA 25 Nov 43), Oblt. Christian Eickhoff (KIA 26 Jan 43). (*Dietze via Meyer*)

JG 26 Victory Claims: 16–17 September 1941

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
9/16/41	Oblt.	Müncheberg	7 CO	54	Spitfire	E of Boulogne	7:40 PM	306+315 Sqd	yes
9/17/41	Hptm.	Seifert	1 CO	20	Spitfire	N of Hazebrouck	3:30 PM		yes
9/17/41	Oblt.	Priller	1 CO	48	Spitfire	5km S of Calais	3:35 PM		yes
9/17/41	Lt.	Unzeitig	1	7	Spitfire	5km S of Gravelines	3:40 PM		yes
9/17/41	Lt.	Helmholz	2	1	Spitfire	NW of Dunkirk	3:40 PM		yes
9/17/41	Uffz.	Adam H-G.	2	2	Spitfire	NW of Dunkirk	3:43 PM		yes
9/17/41	Fw.	Cwilinski	2	1	Spitfire	6km SW of Boulogne	3:55 PM		yes
9/17/41	Oblt.	Ebersberger	4 CO	12	Spitfire	Boulogne	3:36 PM		yes
9/17/41		6. Staffel	6	2	Spitfire	Boulogne-Dungeness	7:05 PM		yes
9/17/41	Lt.	Galland P.	8	3	Spitfire	unknown		306 Sqd	unk
9/17/41	Obfw.	Martin	8	7	Spitfire	Longuenesse	3:25 PM	308 Sqd	yes

JG 26 Casualties: 17 September 1941

Date	Rank	Name	Cas	Unit	Aircraft	WNR	Mkgs	Place	Time	Cause
9/17/41	Lt.	Ruhdel, Wolfgang	KIA	3	Bf 109F-4	8284		Hazebrouck-Lille	4:00 PM	Spitfire
9/17/41	Oblt.	Biedermann, Erwin	KIA	9	Bf 109F-4	7217	yl 2	NW of Calais	7:10 PM	Spitfire
9/17/41	Lt.	Witzel, Hans-Karl	KIA	1 St	Bf 109F-4	8339		W of Bergues	4:00 PM	Spitfire
9/17/41	Oblt.	Dominikus, Karl	WIA	1 St	Bf 109F-4	7225		Bois de Boulogne		Spitfire
9/17/41	Obfw.	Martin, Max	WIA	8	Bf 109F-4	7122	bk 3	St. Omer	3:45 PM	collision – Spitfire

18 September

A German tanker passing through the Channel required fighter escorts in overlapping shifts. The 7th Staffel, after seeing the ship pass safely through the

Dover Straits, landed at Mardyck at 1005. They were relieved by Hptm. Adolph, leading eight Second Gruppe FW 190s. Off Blankenberge the tanker was attacked by three Blenheims escorted by No. 41 Sqd. Spitfires and No. 615 Sqd. Hurricanes. After their attack – successful, according to the British – the Blenheims attempted to withdraw individually. One Blenheim was shot down by Obfw. Willi Roth. While circling the crashed bomber, Hptm. Adolph was shot down by a Spitfire. The Germans did not see him crash, and after the seven Focke-Wulfs returned to Moorsele without him, several Staffeln, including the 2nd, 4th, and 7th, sent flights to the Channel to search for him, but to no avail. His body washed up on a Belgian beach three weeks later. Walter Adolph's FW 190 was the first lost in aerial combat. Adolph was a Knight's Cross holder with twenty-five victories, including one in Spain and fifteen gained in his seventy-nine combat flights with JG 26.

Fighter Command planned two Circuses for the afternoon, but there was a mix-up. One bomber formation never showed up, and its escorts got intermingled with those heading for Rouen with Circus No. 99, leaving some squadrons in vulnerable positions. One was No. 452 Squadron (RAAF), which was muscled out of its place in the close escort "beehive" by No. 607 Sqd.'s Hurricanes. A JG 2 formation was first to attack the mass of Allied aircraft, followed closely by the Third Gruppe from Ligescourt. Oblt. Müncheberg's 7th Staffel hit the close escort from above just as the formation turned from Rouen, and downed four No. 452 Sqd. Spitfires and one No. 607 Sqd. Hurricane. The First and Second Gruppen arrived after the formation was back over the Channel, and claimed one more Spitfire; the 8th Staffel also claimed two, in unspecified locations. JG 2's four Spitfire claims bring the German total to twelve, double the actual RAF loss of six. Fighter Command's 16-8-7 claims included a "Curtiss Hawk", a misidentification of the FW 190, the radial-engined fighter that would be the RAF's nemesis for the next year. Luftflotte 3's fighter units sustained no losses or recordable damage in the afternoon combats.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 18 September 1941

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
9/18/41	Oblt.	Priller	1 CO	49	Spitfire	5km W of Dungeness	4:25 PM		yes
9/18/41	Obfw.	Roth	4	12	Blenheim	Ostend	11:15 AM	88 Sqd	yes
9/18/41	Uffz.	Lindemann	7	2	Spitfire	5km W of Fecamp	4:05 PM	452 Sqd	yes
9/18/41	Oblt.	Müncheberg	7 CO	55	Hurricane	Yvetot	4:06 PM	607 Sqd	yes
9/18/41	Oblt.	Mietusch	7	11	Spitfire	SE of Le Paradis	4:15 PM	452 Sqd	yes
9/18/41	Oblt.	Müncheberg	7 CO	56	Spitfire	Ste Helene	4:15 PM	452 Sqd	yes
9/18/41	Fw.	Ehlen	7	6	Spitfire	30km NW of Dieppe	4:23 PM	452 Sqd	unk
9/18/41	Hptm.	Schmid	8 CO	31	Spitfire	unknown	4:00 PM		yes
9/18/41	Oblt.	Meyer	8	4	Spitfire	unknown	4:05 PM		yes

19 September

Joachim Müncheberg was promoted to Hauptmann and given command of the Second Gruppe. Oblt. Klaus Mietusch succeeded Müncheberg as Kapitän of the 7th Staffel.

20 September

Fighter Command tried a new tactic to extend and wear down the German defenders. In the afternoon it dispatched three Circuses simultaneously – No. 100A to the Hazebrouck motor yards, No. 100B to the Abbeville motor yards,

and No. 100C to the Rouen shipyards. The number of support wings assigned to each Circus had to be reduced, and the total number of RAF aircraft sent over France was not significantly greater than for a single Circus. For the German controllers it was business as usual. Defensive flying was compressed into a single hour, 1615–1715. It appears that JG 26 was concentrated against Circus No. 100A. Obstlt. Galland claimed two Spitfires inland from Dunkirk; pilots of his three Gruppen claimed six more in the same general area. The Geschwader sustained no losses.

JG 2 fought the escort of the other two Circuses; the exuberant Richthofen pilots claimed thirteen Spitfires for the loss of one pilot. An unusual aspect of the day's fighting was the participation of the Jagdfliegerschule 5 Ergänzungsstaffel, which claimed at least three Spitfires near Fécamp for the loss of one pilot.

F/O Franciszek Surma of No. 308 Sqd. had a long, inconclusive dogfight over the Channel with an experienced German pilot. His opponent was almost certainly from JG 2, but these comments from his combat report are pertinent: "From my experience on this Circus I have formed the opinion that the Me 109F is superior to the Spitfire V in both speed and climbing power. The German pilots' . . . tactics have changed as they did not attack from high above, but mostly on the same level." This was a prescient observation. The superiority of the Spitfire in turning combat was drummed into the German pilots from flight school, especially by instructors who had been withdrawn from the western front for a rest. The pilots of the Kanalgeschwader now had enough confidence in the Bf 109F to take on the Spitfires on the latter's own terms.

The 7th Staffel began its conversion to the FW 190 at Ligescourt, the Third Gruppe base. Theo Lindemann made his first flight in a Focke-Wulf fighter, and then left to become Hptm. Müncheberg's adjutant at Moorsele.



A 6th Staffel FW 190A-1 in front of Moorsele's only permanent building, the maintenance hangar. (*Vanoverbeke*)

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
9/20/41	Obstlt.	Galland A.	Ge CO	84	Spitfire	Bergues-Bourbourg	4:45 PM		unk
9/20/41	Obstlt.	Galland A.	Ge CO	85	Spitfire	6km NW of Braye-Dunes	4:55 PM		unk
9/20/41	Lt.	Dippel	2	4	Spitfire	6km N of Wissant	4:55 PM		yes
9/20/41	Uffz.	Dietze	2	2	Spitfire	8km SW of Calais	5:00 PM		yes
9/20/41	Fw.	Leibold	3	5	Spitfire	10km NE of Clairmarais	4:40 PM		yes
9/20/41	Oblt.	Ebersberger	4 CO	13	Spitfire	Mardyck	4:52 PM		yes
9/20/41	Oblt.	Borris	6	8	Spitfire	Mardyck	4:57 PM		yes
9/20/41	Hptm.	Schmid	8 CO	32	Spitfire	unknown	4:45 PM		yes

21 September

The aircraft of Circus No. 101, twelve Blenheims escorted by fourteen squadrons of Spitfires and Hurricanes, began taking off at 1530. The Bf 109F Gruppen began making their Alarmstarts at 1540; this quick reaction allowed the defenders to meet the RAF formation en route to their targets at Béthune and Gosnay, rather than on their withdrawal. Hptm. Müncheberg's FW 190s did not take off until nearly 1600, but their greater speed in the climb enabled them to join the Bf 109s above the Pas de Calais. The Kenley Wing, one of the two Fighter Command escort cover wings, missed the bombers, and finally crossed the Channel alone. It met a large force of Bf 109s – probably the Third Gruppe – as it crossed the coast near Desvres, and lost two Spitfires in the ensuing combats. The 8th Staffel lost Lt. Ulrich Dziaslas, who was shot down near Berck by the incoming Spitfires. The main RAF force was left vulnerable by the absence of half its high cover. The Second Gruppe's Focke-Wulfs took on the other high cover wing, the Northolt Wing, and the 6th Staffel downed two Spitfires. This combat match is



Hptm. Rolf Schrödter, Third Gruppe technical officer; he later followed Galland to Berlin. (Genth)

confirmed by the Polish pilots' victory claims for radial-engined "MB 151s" and "Mc 200s". Meanwhile the Geschwader Stabschwarm and the First Gruppe poured through the gap to attack the close escort, which lost 5-1 Spitfires and 1-1 Hurricanes. The Spitfire squadrons were still flying in vulnerable line astern formations; the lone Hurricane squadron had switched to four abreast ("finger fours", the standard Luftwaffe Schwarm formation since 1938), but could not overcome their aircraft's performance deficit. The Geschwader claimed at least fifteen victories in this engagement, of which twelve were confirmed, and lost only Lt. Dziaslas. Fighter Command lost 12-2 fighters.

JG 2 claimed ten Spitfires from Circus No. 101. Only two locations are known, both off Dover. Times of

the claims vary, but most are around 1640–1650, when the returning RAF formation would have been approaching Dover. However, no British aircraft appear to have been lost at this time – another problem best left for the JG 2 historian.

The Jafü issued landing orders at 1643. Circus No. 102, comprising six Hampdens escorted by ten fighter squadrons, was detected at 1718 while approaching the coast. The Hampdens proceeded to Lille, where they bombed the railroad repair shops. Although both high cover wings were out of position, the defenders were unable to take full advantage, and shot down only 2-1 Spitfires from the close escort. It is probable that the interval between the RAF Circuses was just enough to keep some unserviced German fighters on the ground.

Fw. Walter Matoni left the Second Gruppe and joined III/JG 2 at St. Pol. The combat-experienced Matoni had been with the Geschwader for only a month, and the reason for his transfer is unknown.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 21 September 1941

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
9/21/41	Obstlt.	Galland A.	Ge CO	86	Spitfire	SE of Etaples	4:23 PM	Tangmere Wing	yes
9/21/41	Obstlt.	Galland A.	Ge CO	87	Spitfire	S of Dunkirk	5:35 PM	111 Sqd	yes
9/21/41	Uffz.	Karcher	1	1	Spitfire	10km SW of Boulogne			unk
9/21/41	Lt.	Unzeitig	1	8	Spitfire	20km E of Etaples			unk
9/21/41	Lt.	Uiberacker G.	1	2	Spitfire	8km SW of Gravelines	4:30 PM	Tangmere Wing	yes
9/21/41	Oblt.	Eickhoff	2 CO	5	Spitfire	near Béthune	4:20 PM	Tangmere Wing	yes
9/21/41	Uffz.	Adam H-G.	2	3	Spitfire	3km NW of Etaples	4:35 PM	Tangmere Wing	yes
9/21/41	Lt.	Schauder	3	6	Spitfire	E of Hazebrouck	5:30 PM	111 Sqd	yes
9/21/41	Lt.	Weiss	6	1	Spitfire	Etaples/5km NW of Berck	4:25 PM	315 Sqd	unk
9/21/41	Oblt.	Borris	6	9	Spitfire	Etaples	4:30 PM	315 Sqd	yes
9/21/41	Oblt.	Schneider W.	6 CO	18	Spitfire	Boulogne	4:30 PM	315 Sqd	yes
9/21/41	Oblt.	Schneider W.	6 CO	19	Spitfire	Desvres	4:35 PM	315 Sqd	yes
9/21/41	Hptm.	Schöpfel	III CO	34	Spitfire	unknown	4:30 PM	485+602 Sqd	yes
9/21/41	Lt.	Johannsen	7	7	Spitfire	20km W of Cap Gris Nez	4:20 PM	485+602 Sqd	unk
9/21/41	Oblt.	Mietusch	7 CO	12	Spitfire	Berck sur Mer	4:23 PM	485+602 Sqd	yes
9/21/41	Oblt.	Mietusch	7 CO	13	Spitfire	20km WNW of Somme Est	4:30 PM	485+602 Sqd	unk
9/21/41	Hptm.	Schmid	8 CO	33	Spitfire	unknown	4:10 PM	485+602 Sqd	yes
9/21/41	Hptm.	Schmid	8 CO	34	Spitfire	unknown	4:15 PM	485+602 Sqd	yes
9/21/41	Uffz.	Korte	8	1	Spitfire	unknown	4:20 PM	485+602 Sqd	yes

27 September

After several idle days Fighter Command scheduled a two-part mission for the afternoon. Circus No. 103A sent twenty-four Blenheims to bomb the Amiens motor yards; Circus No. 103B dispatched eleven Blenheims to the Mazingarbe power station. The action was very compressed in time. The first German fighters took off from readiness at 1505, and landing orders were given at 1605. JG 26 made contact with Circus No. 103B near Gravelines; JG 2 probably concentrated on the Amiens force. Combat continued over the targets and back out to sea. JG 26 claimed ten Spitfires and one Blenheim; JG 2, six Spitfires. Fighter Command lost fourteen Spitfires, plus several damaged, and eleven pilots. The available RAF records do not mention a lost Blenheim, but a

German radio message mentioning a Blenheim floating in the Channel was intercepted by the British at 1606, sixteen minutes after Oblt. Schmid had shot one down. The 2nd Staffel's Uffz. Dietze took off from Audembert at 1505 and at 1540 was forced to bail out over his Clairmarais base, slightly wounded. Dietze was the only German pilot casualty; two JG 2 aircraft force-landed with combat damage.



Oblt. Galland tries out a 6th Staffel FW 190A-1. (*Molge*)

JG 26 Victory Claims: 27 September 1941

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
9/27/41	Fw.	Leibold	3	6	Spitfire	SW of Gravelines	3:31 PM		yes
9/27/41	Lt.	Keller	II St	2	Spitfire	Watten	3:38 PM		yes
9/27/41	Oblt.	Ebersberger	4 CO	14	Spitfire	Gravelines	3:39 PM		yes
9/27/41	Oblt.	Koch	5	8	Spitfire	Gravelines	3:35 PM		yes
9/27/41	Obfw.	Bierwirth	5	1	Spitfire	10km NW of Calais	3:40 PM		unk
9/27/41	Oblt.	Galland W-F.	6	2	Spitfire	Boulogne	3:35 PM		yes
9/27/41	Hptm.	Schöpfel	III CO	35	Spitfire	unknown	3:30 PM		yes
9/27/41	Hptm.	Schmid	8 CO	35	Spitfire	unknown	3:23 PM		yes
9/27/41	Hptm.	Schmid	8 CO	36	Spitfire	unknown	3:35 PM		yes
9/27/41	Hptm.	Schmid	8 CO	37	Blenheim	unknown	3:50 PM		yes
9/27/41	Oblt.	Haiböck	9	10	Spitfire	1km N of Calais	3:40 PM		yes

JG 26 Casualties: 18–27 September 1941

Date	Rank	Name	Cas	Unit	Aircraft	WNr	Mkgs	Place	Time	Cause
9/18/41	Hptm.	Adolph, Walter	KIA	II CO	FW 190A-1	028	<<	30km NW of Ostend	11:20 AM	Spitfire
9/21/41	Lt.	Dzialas, Ulrich	KIA	8	Bf 109F-4	7161		S of Boulogne	4:15 PM	Spitfire
9/27/41	Uffz.	Dietze, Gottfried	WIA	2	Bf 109F-4	8365	bk 5	Clairmarais	3:40 PM	combat

1 October

According to the logbook evidence, the Geschwader's routine of Sitzbereitschaft (cockpit readiness) and Alarmstarts was altered by orders for a freie Jagd to Ramsgate, which was flown from 1300 to 1400. Contact was made with enemy fighters that were engaged on a sweep of their own, but no claims or losses

resulted. The 7th Staffel's Uffz. Georg Pistor took off from Crécy on his first combat sortie, saw seventy to eighty fighters, and force-landed on Audembert an hour later, out of fuel.

An hour after returning from the freie Jagd the 1st Staffel was scrambled to investigate reports of ship activity in the Channel. They attacked the fighter escort for an RAF rescue launch, and downed two No. 91 Sqd. Spitfires. Oblt. Priller claimed another Spitfire a little later; this claim was not confirmed. Hptm. Schmid claimed a Spitfire over Dover at 1747; details are unknown.

Uffz. Erich Jauer was having problems with one of the officers of the 5th Staffel, and was moved into the 6th. Apparently his reputation had preceded him, and according to his diary he was permitted very little flying.

Pilots joining the combat Gruppen of the Geschwader from the Ergänzungsgruppe or direct from flight schools during October included: First Gruppe: Uffz. Joseph Zirngibl; Second Gruppe: Uffz. Karlheinz Kern, Uffz. Hermann Schwardt; Third Gruppe: Uffz. Oswald Fischer, Uffz. Viktor Hager, Uffz. Alfred Niese, Uffz. Erich Schwarz.

2 October

A Fighter Command sweep followed by an abortive Circus to Le Havre prompted orders for two scrambles by the Geschwader. Oblt. Schmid claimed the Schlager pilots' only victory, a Spitfire. The raid was in JG 2's zone of operations, and they saw most of the activity, claiming eight Spitfires; three of JG 2's Bf 109F-2s made belly-landings after the combat.

Fw. Helmut Walther crashed the Second Gruppe's Kf 35B-1 courier aircraft, killing a civilian passenger. Walther survived, and was taken to the Luftwaffe hospital in Courtrai.

3 October

With the arrival of autumn the cloudless weather that was a prerequisite for the complicated Circus flight plans came less and less often. Only eight Circuses were attempted in October. On this day Circus No. 105 sent six Blenheims to bomb the Ostend power station. The Geschwader was scrambled at 1520 and claimed three Spitfires off Dunkirk and Ostend. At least two Second Gruppe FW 190s, those of Lt. Lindemann and Fw. Glunz, sustained landing gear damage while landing back on Moorseele. It was decided to move the Gruppe to Wevelghem, a larger and better-drained airfield.

6 October

The Ergänzungsgruppe began transferring from Wevelghem to Maldegem.

12 October

The Jafü 2 controllers were unable to position the entire Geschwader for an attack on Circus No. 107, a raid on St. Omer, and the First Gruppe apparently attacked alone, claiming two Spitfires near Berck sur Mer for no losses. This combat may have been with the Kenley Wing, which lost two Spitfires in this area, but these Spitfires could have engaged JG 2, which claimed two Spitfires for the loss of one pilot. Unfortunately the locations of JG 2's combats are unspecified in the claim summaries.

JG 26's only casualty was non-operational. An Ergänzungsgruppe instructor, Obfw. Ernst Nischik, crashed his Bf 109F-1 in a Ledegem street while coming

in to land on Moorsele. He was uninjured. The accident was attributed to pilot error.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 1–12 October 1941

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	CI #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
10/1/41	Oblt.	Priller	1 CO	50	Spitfire	mid-Channel	2:57 PM	91 Sqd	yes
10/1/41	Lt.	Unzeitig	1	9	Spitfire	mid-Channel	2:59 PM	91 Sqd	yes
10/1/41	Oblt.	Priller	1 CO	51	Spitfire	W of Boulogne	3:35 PM		yes
10/1/41	Hptm.	Schmid	8 CO	38	Spitfire	Dover	5:37 PM		yes
10/2/41	Hptm.	Schmid	8 CO	39	Spitfire	unknown	6:42 PM		yes
10/3/41	Hptm.	Seifert	1 CO	21	Spitfire	20km NW of Ostend	3:47 PM	92 Sqd	yes
10/3/41	Lt.	Schauder	3	7	Spitfire	20km NW of Dunkirk	3:50 PM	92 Sqd	yes
10/3/41	Hptm.	Schmid	8 CO	40	Spitfire	20km N of Ostend	3:52 PM	54 Sqd	yes
10/12/41	Hptm.	Seifert	1 CO	22	Spitfire	Berck sur Mer	1:20 PM	452+602 Sqd	yes
10/12/41	Hptm.	Priller	1 CO	52	Spitfire	5km E of Berck sur Mer	1:25 PM	452+602 Sqd	yes



Hptm. Johannes Schmid, celebrating his fortieth victory on 3 October. Schmid had a meteoric career with JG 26, scoring forty-five victories in 137 missions before his death in the Channel on 6 November. (*G. Schmidt*)

13 October

Good weather prompted the first two-Circus day in two weeks. The six Blenheims of Circus No. 108A targeted the Arques ship lift; Circus No. 108B, thirty minutes later, sent eighteen Blenheims to bomb the Mazingarbe power station. Fighter Command had not yet learned that such close spacing of targets in time and space did little to disperse the defenses; the airborne interceptors could attack both forces as opportunities arose. All seven of Jafü 2's combat units (the Stab and three Gruppen of JG 26, the Stab and Second and Third

Gruppen of JG 2) flew single missions against the combined RAF force. Combat was especially widespread and vicious, starting in the target areas and continuing over the Channel. Nearly all of the twenty-five escorting Fighter Command squadrons engaged German fighters. Theo Lindemann commented in his log-book that the twelve Spitfires attacked by the Second Gruppe Stabsschwarm were especially “einsatzfreudig”, or eager for combat.

The Geschwader Stabsschwarm engaged the Arques force. Obstlt. Galland found a new way to penetrate the “beehive” and attack the Blenheims – from directly beneath, while still in his climb. His target burst into flames and crashed, and Galland dove away untouched. His wingman, Lt. Peter Göring, was not as fortunate. He was hit by his target’s turret gunner and crashed to his death. A claim for the Blenheim was filed in Göring’s behalf, but this was apparently a “courtesy claim”, and it was not confirmed. Only one Blenheim was lost. The Geschwader claimed eight Spitfires from the two Circuses. One Second Gruppe FW 190 crash-landed on Moorsele after the battle; apart from Göring’s Bf 109F this was Luftflotte 3’s only material loss for the day. JG 2 claimed eleven Spitfires, and sustained no losses.

Fighter Command lost 13-2 aircraft, and claimed 22-2-18 fighters; it was thus by their reckoning a very successful day. No. 452 Squadron’s P/O “Bluey” Truscott shot at a parachutist, but the action met with the disapproval of his fellow Australian pilots, and it was apparently not repeated. Ironically, no German pilot bailed out on this day, and Truscott’s target was probably Allied. The gun camera film of a No. 303 Squadron pilot provided RAF intelligence with the first clear evidence of the FW 190’s presence on the Channel front.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 13 October 1941

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
10/13/41	Obstlt.	Galland A.	Ge CO	88	Spitfire	St. Omer	2:17 PM		yes
10/13/41	Obstlt.	Galland A.	Ge CO	89	Blenheim	Samer	2:27 PM	139 Sqd	yes
10/13/41	Lt.	Göring	Ge St	1	Blenheim	Hubertus/Samer	2:30 PM	139 Sqd	no
10/13/41	Hptm.	Priller	1 CO	53	Spitfire	15km W of Berck sur Mer	3:30 PM		yes
10/13/41	Lt.	Schauder	3	8	Spitfire	W of St. Omer	2:30 PM		yes
10/13/41	Fw.	Babenz	3	7	Spitfire	10km E of Dungeness	2:43 PM		yes
10/13/41	Lt.	Schauder	3	9	Spitfire	10km W of Etaples	3:35 PM		yes
10/13/41	Hptm.	Müncheberg	II CO	57	Spitfire	Samer	2:33 PM		yes
10/13/41	Hptm.	Schmid	8 CO	42	Spitfire	unknown			unk
10/13/41	Hptm.	Schmid	8 CO	41	Spitfire	unknown	2:35 PM		yes

15 October

Alarmstarts were ordered in response to RAF fighter sweeps, but were nonproductive. The Second Gruppe began transferring from Moorsele to Wevelghem.

17 October

Uffz. Josef Holbach was killed while on a coastal patrol of the Rotterdam area with a Schwarm of Ergänzungsgruppe trainees. According to a Dutch witness Holbach lost control of his Messerschmitt at low altitude and crashed into a dike.

The First Gruppe began moving the short distance from Clairmarais to Arques, another airfield in the St. Omer complex. Arques had been improved during the year and was better suited for winter operations.

19 October

The Third Gruppe also began its move to winter quarters. Oddly, they left the relatively high ground of Cr cy and transferred to Coquelles, right on the coast at Calais. Two of the Gruppe's Bf 109Fs were damaged while landing on Coquelles.

21 October

Fighter Command dispatched five wings on sweeps of the Pas de Calais. The Jaf  identified bombers, and ordered a full-strength response, but the Blenheims, if they were there, did not cross the coast. The Geschwader made its interception south of Cap Gris Nez, above Boulogne and Etaples, and shot down nine Spitfires. Hptm. Schmid's 8th Staffel claimed two of these, but lost three Messerschmitts when they were attacked from above. Uffz. Werner Korte, Schmid's wingman, was killed; Lt. Hans Ragotzi bailed out with injuries, and the third pilot bailed out uninjured. JG 2 claimed one Spitfire from this sweep for the loss of one Messerschmitt. Later in the afternoon Obstlt. Galland's Stabsschwarm and the 2nd Staffel attacked No. 611 Squadron, which was escorting an ASR launch off Le Touquet, and shot down two Spitfires. Fighter Command lost 12-4 Spitfires during the day.

The Erg nzungsgruppe suffered another fatality when the engine of Gefr. Alois Linecker's Bf 109E-7 caught fire one thousand feet above Maldegthem; Linecker was unable to get out of his aircraft.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 21 October 1941

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
10/21/41	Obstlt.	Galland A.	Ge CO	90	Spitfire	W of Samer	12:54 PM		yes
10/21/41	Obstlt.	Galland A.	Ge CO	91	Spitfire	6km W of Hadelot	12:58 PM		yes
10/21/41	Obstlt.	Galland A.	Ge CO	92	Spitfire	15km W of Boulogne	6:16 PM	611 Sqd	yes
10/21/41	Hptm.	Priller	1 CO	54	Spitfire	4km W of Etaples	12:55 PM		yes
10/21/41	Hptm.	Priller	1 CO	55	Spitfire	15km NNW of le Touquet	1:05 PM		yes
10/21/41	Uffz.	Fast	2	1	Spitfire	15km SW of Boulogne	6:17 PM	611 Sqd	yes
10/21/41	Oblt.	Ebersberger	4 CO	15	Spitfire	SW of Boulogne	1:06 PM		yes
10/21/41	Oblt.	Seegatz	4	16	Spitfire	Boulogne	1:10 PM		yes
10/21/41	Lt.	Johannsen	7	8	Spitfire	2km S of Boulogne	1:00 PM		yes
10/21/41	Oblt.	Meyer	8	5	Spitfire	unknown	12:55 PM		yes
10/21/41	Hptm.	Schmid	8 CO	43	Spitfire	unknown	1:00 PM		yes

JG 26 Casualties: 2-21 October 1941

Date	Rank	Name	Cas	Unit	Aircraft	WNr	Mkgs	Place	Time	Cause
10/2/41	Fw.	Walther, Helmut	WIFA	5	Kl 35B-1	1636		Halluin		crashed
10/12/41	Fw.	Nischik, Ernst	no	E	Bf 109F-2	5738		Moorsele		crashed
10/13/41	Lt.	G�ring, Peter	KIA	Ge St	Bf 109F-4	8288		SE of Boulogne	2:30 PM	Blenheim
10/17/41	Uffz.	Holbach, Josef	KIFA	1/E	Bf 109E-7	5866		Vlaardingen/ Rotterdam	5:55 PM	engine
10/21/41	Uffz.	Korte, Werner	KIA	8	Bf 109F-4	7252		Boulogne/ Camiers	1:10 PM	Spitfire
10/21/41	Gefr.	Linecker, Alois	KIFA	1/E	Bf 109E-7	916		Maldegthem	3:30 PM	takeoff
10/21/41	Lt.	Ragotzi, Hans	WIA	8	Bf 109F-4	7102		NE Samer	1:20 PM	Spitfire

23 October

Le Bourget was still active as a conversion facility, although some Staffeln trained on the FW 190 on their own fields. Uffz. Georg Pistor, a new 7th Staffel

pilot, made eleven Focke-Wulf flights from Le Bourget beginning on this date and returned to Coquelles on the 26th.

24 October

Several Gruppen were scrambled in response to RAF fighter sweeps, but made no claims and sustained no losses.

26 October

Several Alarmstarts were carried out without result.

27 October

Morning patrols were sent up on reports of RAF aircraft over the Channel, but no contact was made. At 1300 the Stabsschwarm and the First and Third Gruppen were scrambled on reports of a substantial RAF force approaching from Ramsgate. This was the Biggin Hill Wing, engaged on a Rodeo to St. Omer. Just before the point of deepest penetration, the wing's high cover squadron, No. 401 (RCAF), was hit from above by the First Gruppe, and two Spitfires went down. After several minutes of combat, the part of the Squadron that had re-formed was hit again, this time by the Stabsschwarm and the Third Gruppe. Two more Canadian fighters crashed; Obstlt. Galland's victim, Sgt. Brian Hodgkinson, was named in Galland's victory report and survived the war as a prisoner. Two squadron pilots bailed out over England; another was killed when his damaged Spitfire crashed in England. Yet another pilot crash-landed his aircraft in a Kent field. Five German claimants for the seven Spitfires are known. The 8th Staffel's Oblt. Meyer is probably a sixth; his claim is dated 28 October in the newly-recovered Bundesarchiv records, but matches the 27 October combat in its particulars. There is no other evidence that any flying took place on the 28th.

Oblt. Schmid and one JG 2 pilot claimed Spitfires later in the afternoon; details are unknown.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 27–28 October 1941

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
10/27/41	Obstlt.	Galland A.	Ge CO	93	Spitfire	S of Dunkirk	1:25 PM	401 Sqd	yes
10/27/41	Hptm.	Priller	1 CO	56	Spitfire	5km N of Watten	1:15 PM	401 Sqd	yes
10/27/41	Lt.	Helmholz	2	2	Spitfire	NW of Watten	1:15 PM	401 Sqd	yes
10/27/41	Lt.	Schmidt J.	3	3	Spitfire	20km NE of St. Omer	1:05 PM	401 Sqd	yes
10/27/41	Uffz.	Dirksen	8	2	Spitfire	unknown	1:25 PM	401 Sqd	yes
10/27/41	Hptm.	Schmid	8 CO	44	Spitfire	Calais	3:05 PM		yes
10/28/41	Oblt.	Meyer	8	6	Spitfire	unknown	1:20 PM		yes

29 October

At least one Alarmstart was carried out; no contact was made.

31 October

A number of small formations of RAF fighters flew Rhubarb missions along the French coast. Several German units were scrambled and flew back and forth across the Pas de Calais without making contact. One First Gruppe Bf 109F was wrecked while attempting to take off from Clairmarais.

1 November

Routine patrols and Alarmstarts were carried out, without claims or losses.

The 4th Staffel moved from Wevelghem to Coxyde, on the Belgian coast.

Oblt. Rolf Hermichen, a professional Luftwaffe officer and pilot, transferred into the Third Gruppe from II/SKG 210.

Pilots joining the combat Gruppen from training during the month included: First Gruppe: Fw. Leopold Eichinger; Second Gruppe: Fw. Paul Rieger; Third Gruppe: Obfw. Henri Starke. These men all came directly from training schools rather than via the Ergänzungsgruppe. Whether this was to make up a temporary shortfall or for some other reason is unknown.

2-4 November

Routine patrols and Alarmstarts were carried out, without claims or losses.

5 November

Several small formations of Spitfires flew Rhubarbs along the Channel coast. At 1023 two No. 611 Sqd. Spitfires overflowed Coxyde at 1,500 feet. The 4th Staffel readiness pilots, Fw. Glunz and his Rottenflieger, took off at 1024 and caught up to the Spitfires off Gravelines. Glunz shot one down at 1040; the pair of Focke-Wulfs landed back at Coxyde at 1046.

In an unrelated incident Ogfr. Max Hofinger, a 4th Staffel mechanic, was struck by a FW 190 propeller and killed.

6 November

In early afternoon Fighter Command dispatched two missions across the Channel. The first comprised two Hurricane fighter-bomber squadrons escorted by the Northolt Wing; the expected barge concentration was not found, so targets of opportunity were bombed. One of these was Coxyde. The 4th Staffel scrambled at 1445 to defend their airfield. No. 303 Squadron of the escort was engaged, apparently without result; one No. 607 Sqd. Hurricane crashed into the Channel northwest of Gravelines, claimed (as a Spitfire) by both the Second Gruppe flak detachment at Coxyde and the 4th Staffel's Lt. Michalski.

A half hour later the Kenley Wing approached the coast on what was described in the Allied pilots' combat reports as "Tomahawk cover". The Third Gruppe, led today by Hptm. Schmid, was in position and dove on the rear of No. 452 Squadron. Schmid's target crashed into the Channel; it was his 45th victory. While Schmid was circling the crash site the wing of his Bf 109F-4 struck the water and broke off. The plane hit the water and sank immediately. The 6th Staffel had by now joined the attack on the RAF fighters. A second Spitfire went down; two Focke-Wulf pilots claimed victories. The chase continued almost to Dover, but no more aircraft were lost. One First Gruppe Bf 109F belly-landed on Coquelles after the battle, as did a II/JG 2 Bf 109F.

To replace Hptm. Schmid, Oblt. Karl Borris transferred from the 6th to the 8th Staffel as its Staffelführer, or prospective Staffel Kapitän.

Uffz. Erich Jauer, unable to fit in with either the 5th or 6th Staffel, was sent to an aircraft factory for a tour as a test pilot.

Flying from Coquelles, the 7th Staffel's Uffz. Georg Pistor flew four touch-and-goes in a FW 190 in the morning, and then took part in two afternoon missions in a Bf 109F. Conversion of the Third Gruppe to the Focke-Wulf was now well underway, although the pilots were not yet flying them in combat. Rolf

Schrödter, the Third Gruppe technical officer, recalled:

“When the Bf 109 was replaced by the FW 190, our troubles began all over again, this time with the BMW radial engine, which often only lasted for a few hours; it destroyed itself by eating its own connecting rods. The engines that were still salvageable were sent to the repair shop at Albert, dismantled, and examined in detail. I no longer recall how often I myself had to fly there to take part in the investigation. We finally concluded that an unfortunate exhaust location permitted a single cylinder to overheat. We were able to change the exhaust arrangement at our own fields. The 8th Staffel’s Kapitän, Oblt. Borris, was awarded a golden watch by BMW when his engine was the first to reach one hundred hours. Our supply of replacement parts frequently ran out and I had to obtain them, wherever they might be. For example, when we had difficulties with the oil pumps for the landing gear hydraulics, which were corroding in a very narrow passage, I set out in a Bf 109 to find the replacements, searching all of Germany, even East Prussia and Upper Silesia. Thus were many difficulties overcome.”

7 November

In the morning an RAF practice mission over the English coast brought several Luftwaffe flights to mid-Channel before orders to return were issued. In the afternoon Fighter Command sent several Rodeos and Ramrods across the Straits. German opposition was primarily by small formations, and few contacts were recorded. Off Etaples the Geschwader Stabsschwarm dove on the rear of No. 72 Squadron, which was flying as part of a wing sweep. Uffz. Richter shot down a trailing Spitfire. On the dive through the RAF formation Richter got separated from his Schwarm. He was chased back over Boulogne and was hit by a long-range shot from a pursuing Spitfire before the latter turned back for England. Badly injured, Richter bailed out near Desvres but died on the ground. Since joining the Geschwader Stab in July, Richter, a former civilian pilot, had claimed three victories in forty-four combat sorties.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 5–7 November 1941

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
11/5/41	Fw.	Glunz	4	7	Spitfire	Gravelines	10:40 AM	611 Sqd	yes
11/6/41		II. Flak Unit	II	2	Spitfire	Coxyde		607 Sqd	unk
11/6/41	Obfw.	Roth	4	13	Spitfire	Dunkirk	2:55 PM	303 Sqd	yes
11/6/41	Lt.	Michalski	4	1	Spitfire	30km NW of Gravelines	3:03 PM	607 Sqd	unk
11/6/41	Oblt.	Galland W-F.	6	3	Spitfire	Calais	3:35 PM	452 Sqd	yes
11/6/41	Ogfr.	Vogt	6	1	Spitfire	Calais	3:40 PM	452 Sqd	yes
11/6/41	Hptm.	Schmid	8 CO	45	Spitfire	10km N of Calais	3:48 PM	452 Sqd	unk
11/7/41	Uffz.	Richter H.	Ge St	3	Spitfire	2km N of Etaples	3:10 PM	72 Sqd	yes

8 November

A large build-up over the English coast prompted Jafü 2 to scramble all but one of its defensive units shortly after noon; the Third Gruppe was apparently held on the ground in reserve. The RAF force was headed for two targets: two Hurricane fighter-bomber squadrons escorted by five Spitfire squadrons were to attack a distillery at St. Pol shortly before the twelve Blenheims of Circus No. 110 bombed the railroad repair facility at Lille. The Blenheims were escorted

and supported by eleven Spitfire squadrons drawn from Nos. 11, 10, and 12 Groups. Several factors combined to give the Luftwaffe the opportunity for a defensive triumph: (1) the Jafü's early reaction gave the German fighters ample time to gain altitude and position; (2) a bright sun shielded the Germans, while a persistent ground fog silhouetted their opponents; (3) high winds caused rendezvous to be missed and destroyed the operation's timing. The escort cover wing for the St. Pol raiders was forced to orbit south of Le Touquet to allow stragglers to catch up, and was attacked repeatedly from above by small groups of Bf 109s from the First Gruppe and III/JG 2. Five Spitfires failed to return from this operation; the German units filed a total of seven claims.

Circus No. 110's problems began before the force even left England. Its close escort was unable to form properly, and one of the two rear support wings was fogged in and unable to leave the ground. The second rear support wing, No. 12 Group's Digby Wing, was led on this occasion by an overaged wing commander who had never flown on a combat mission, much less led one. He got his wing to the French coast in good formation, but too early. Instead of proceeding to Lille, he began to orbit, but much too tightly for the outside flights to keep up. Peppered by the Dunkirk flak, the wing disintegrated into a swarm of Spitfires flying alone or in pairs. Hptm. Müncheberg's FW 190s dove on isolated aircraft from above, and shot down three aircraft from No. 412, the high squadron. The wing commander also failed to return; his last radio message was reportedly, "I guess I'm too old for this, boys." His presence on the mission in a position of responsibility was an excellent example of the amateurishness that often afflicted Fighter Command's offensive operations during this period of the war.

No. 308 Squadron, the high squadron of the Circus close escort, proceeded alone to France and patrolled from Dunkirk to Calais. Just before turning back the Spitfires were attacked by a number of Bf 109Fs from Hptm. Seifert's First Gruppe. After losing one of their number to Seifert the Polish pilots extricated themselves, joined the main force, and returned.

The high cover wing also missed rendezvous, but proceeded independently on a sweep of Lille, where they eventually found the bombers. No. 452, the high squadron, was engaged almost continuously with Bf 109s until the force reached mid-Channel. Two of its pilots were forced to bail out into the Channel, but were rescued uninjured; a third force-landed in England. Their opponents were probably from the First Gruppe and II/JG 2; each unit filed one claim.

For most of the mission the main force comprised only six Blenheims, two squadrons of the close escort, and the three squadrons of the escort cover wing. Obstlt. Galland, with his instinctive feel for the main point of the battle (in German "Fingerspitzgefühl", literally finger-tip feeling) made contact with the main formation and downed two Spitfires, but could not get at the bombers. The Polish pilots of the escort cover wing were responsible for the only German casualties. The 4th Staffel's Uffz. Karlheinz Kern, flying his first combat mission, was hit over Dunkirk; he struck a telegraph pole while attempting a crash-landing and was killed. Oblt. Theodor Lindemann, the Second Gruppe adjutant, crash-landed his burning Focke-Wulf south of Dunkirk; Lindemann was severely injured.

For the day Luftflotte 3 lost one pilot killed and one injured in the two crashes described above; three more aircraft sustained damage in crash-landings that were possibly combat-related. Fighter Command lost fourteen pilots, including

three squadron leaders and a wing commander, and at least seventeen Spitfires. The RAF would attempt no more large escorted daylight raids until spring. The 1941 hunting season was at an end.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 8 November 1941

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
11/8/41	Obstlt.	Galland A.	Ge CO	94	Spitfire	near Montreuil	12:58 PM	315 Sqd	yes
11/8/41	Obstlt.	Galland A.	Ge CO	95	Spitfire	10km S of Hazebrouck	1:00 PM	302+316 Sqd	yes
11/8/41	Hptm.	Seifert	I CO	23	Spitfire	NW of Dunkirk	1:05 PM	308 Sqd	yes
11/8/41	Lt.	Uiberacker G.	1	3	Spitfire	E of Somme Estuary	12:25 PM	401 Sqd	yes
11/8/41	Hptm.	Priller	1 CO	57	Spitfire	N of Béthune	12:50 PM	302+316 Sqd	yes
11/8/41	Hptm.	Priller	1 CO	58	Spitfire	5km NW of Gravelines	1:10 PM	452 Sqd	unk
11/8/41	Fw.	Babenz	3	8	Spitfire	near Montreuil	12:29 PM	401 Sqd	yes
11/8/41	Hptm.	Müncheberg	II CO	58	Spitfire	Loon Plage	1:07 PM	Digby+412 Sqd	yes
11/8/41	Hptm.	Müncheberg	II CO	59	Spitfire	NNE of Dunkirk	1:15 PM	Digby+412 Sqd	unk
11/8/41	Oblt.	Ebersberger	4 CO	16	Spitfire	N of Dunkirk	1:04 PM	Digby+412 Sqd	yes
11/8/41	Fw.	Glunz	4	8	Spitfire	15km N of Calais	1:08 PM	Digby+412 Sqd	unk
11/8/41	Oblt.	Koch	5	9	Spitfire	Hardifort	1:05 PM	302+316 Sqd	yes
11/8/41	Obfw.	Meyer W.	6	12	Spitfire	St. Omer	1:05 PM	302+316 Sqd	yes
11/8/41	Obfw.	Mackenstedt	6	2	Spitfire	Calais	1:20 PM	Digby+412 Sqd	unk

JG 26 Casualties: 6–8 November 1941

Date	Rank	Name	Cas	Unit	Aircraft	WNr	Mkgs	Place	Time	Cause
11/6/41	Hptm.	Schmid, Johannes	KIA	8 CO	Bf 109F-4	7211	bk 1	NW of Calais	3:57 PM	hit water
11/7/41	Uffz.	Richter, Heinz	KIA	Ge St	Bf 109F-4	7166		SE of Desvres/Calais	2:55 PM	Spitfire
11/8/41	Uffz.	Kern, Karlheinz	KIA	4	FW 190A-1	021		Dunkirk/Vlamerthinge	12:45 PM	Spitfire
11/8/41	Oblt.	Lindemann, Theo	WIA	II St	FW 190A-1	052	<	S of Dunkirk	1:10 PM	Spitfire

9–11 November

The weather worsened. Routine reconnaissance patrols and Alarmstarts were carried out from the Geschwader’s coastal airfields, without claims or losses.

15 November

Routine patrols were executed. An RAF formation approaching Calais prompted the Jafü to order airborne German aircraft to attack, but apparently no contact was made.

Lt. Walter Thorn and Lt. Hans Heitmann joined the Third Gruppe from instructor duty.

17 November

Genobst. Ernst Udet, Generalluftzeugmeister (chief of air equipment) of the Luftwaffe, committed suicide in Berlin. The official release stated that he died while testing a new airplane, and he was to be given a state funeral.

Fw. Hans-Jürgen Fröhlich wrecked a Bf 109F-4 while attempting to take off from Clairmarais on a ferry flight to the First Gruppe’s new main base at St. Omer-Arques.



The opposition: No. 129 (Mysore) Squadron poses at Westhampnett in November. On wing: squadron doctor, P/O Hugo Armstrong (RAAF, KIA). On ground, from left: Sgt. Ramsay (RCAF, KIA), P/O Hall (RAAF), Sgt. Irish (RCAF), unknown, Sgt. Tucker (rear) (Jamaica, KIA), Sgt. Frith (RCAF, KIA), Sgt. Hardy (Rhodesia, KIA), Sgt. Hiskins (RAAF, KIA), S/L Abrahams (RAF), F/L Cunliffe (RAF), Sgt. McPhee (RCAF, KIA), F/L Thomas (RAF), Sgt. Wilson (RAF), Sgt. Drew (RAF), Sgt. Davies (RCAF), unknown. (*Hall*)

18 November

Several Staffeln were scrambled to intercept a Ramrod flown by the Kenley Wing to the Hesdin distillery. Obstlt. Galland led his Führungsstaffel toward the Boulogne flak explosions. He spotted Spitfires beneath him and dove on them in a split-S. He was soon engaged in a “wild dogfight” with Spitfires whose pilots were “eager to attack and possessed outstanding flying skills”, in the words of his combat report. He was finally able to take a shot at a Spitfire from a tight right bank. A cannon shell took off the Spitfire’s right aileron. Galland saw it fall away, and reported that the Spitfire then crashed into the Channel. However, the splash he saw was only the aileron. It was No. 602 Squadron’s pilots who had so impressed Galland. All of their aircraft returned to Kenley. One was “minus starboard aileron”, according to the Squadron history. Neither side sustained any other losses.

In the evening Obstlt. Galland was summoned to Berlin. He was to be one of the six fighter pilots forming the guard of honor at Genobst. Udet’s funeral.

22 November

Nos. 72 and 401 Squadrons flew a successful Rodeo to St. Omer. The First and Third Gruppen were not ordered to take off until the Spitfires were paralleling the coast between Boulogne and Le Touquet, and the Third Gruppe, flying a mixed formation of Messerschmitts and Focke-Wulfs, was attacked while climbing through 6,000 feet by No. 401 Squadron, diving from 17,000 feet. One of the Gruppe’s new FW 190s spun away to crash-land on Coquelles. One Spitfire was shot down; its pilot bailed out and was taken prisoner. Soon after the First Gruppe’s arrival the 1st Staffel’s Fw. Ignaz Schinabeck was severely injured by a Spitfire’s gunfire. He bailed out successfully, but died in the hospital.

The Second Gruppe's Fw. Karl Knobeloch was injured when he force-landed his FW 190 near Ostend on a non-operational flight.

While en route back to France from Udet's funeral Galland was summoned from his train and given the news that Oberst Werner Mölders, the General der Jagdflieger (general of the fighter arm), had been killed in the crash of his He 111. At Mölders' funeral, Reichsmarschall Göring gave Adolf Galland the unwelcome news that Galland was to succeed Mölders as General der Jagdflieger, which was a staff position at the RLM in Berlin.

23 November

The 6th Staffel was scrambled from Coxyde to intercept a dozen fighters approaching Dunkirk at low altitude. At 1326 the controller ordered them to attack; No. 315 Sqd. Spitfires went down between 1327 and 1328. A sixth crash-landed in England with an injured Polish pilot. The Staffel reported at 1339 that it was returning to base. One FW 190 was damaged at Coxyde owing to landing gear problems; whether taking off or returning from this mission is unknown.



The 5th Staffel's Lt. Horst Sternberg prepares to take off from Wevelghem on 25 November in his "black 13". (*Bundesarchiv-Bildarchiv*)

26 November

The 8th Staffel's Fw. Hans Dirksen was ordered to Magdeburg for a tour of duty as an instructor. As is well known, Luftwaffe pilots did not serve fixed tours at the front. Decisions to remove pilots from combat status were made on an individual basis by the Kommandeure in consultation with their Staffel Kapitäne and the Gruppe medical officers.

27 November

Fighter Command took over responsibility from Coastal Command for the highly dangerous Roadstead missions against shipping in the Pas de Calais area. Two Roadsteads were flown today, each by eight Hurricane fighter-bombers with Spitfire escort. One attacked a small convoy north of Fecamp. It was not intercepted; several German formations were scrambled without making



The 5th Staffel Kapitän, Oblt. Wolfgang Kosse (left), chats with a war correspondent at Wevelghem on 25 November. (*Bundesarchiv-Bildarchiv*)

contact. The second RAF force targeted a submarine reported to be at Boulogne. The Hurricane pilots reported encountering over one hundred Bf 109s, at all heights. The fighter-bombers dove from 20,000 to 3,000 feet, dropped their bombs, and attempted to escape at low altitude. One was shot down by flak; two were pursued nearly to Dungeness by Messerschmitts and shot down into the Channel. The victorious German pilots were Hptm. Schöpfel, the Third Gruppe Kommandeur, and Uffz. Ernst Christof, a 1st Staffel Rottenführer. It is worth noting that the seven escort squadrons, which remained at 20,000 feet, reported seeing no German aircraft at all.

The Third Gruppe's Lt. Theodor Eyler was injured when he crash-landed his FW 190 on Coquelles. He was on a combat mission, but the crash was probably not combat-related.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 18–27 November 1941

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
11/18/41	Obstlt.	Galland A.	Ge CO	96	Spitfire	20km W of Boulogne	12:32 PM	602 Sqd	yes
11/22/41	Lt.	Thorn	7	1	Spitfire	unknown	4:52 PM	401 Sqd	yes
11/22/41	Fw.	Weber	8	2	Spitfire	Calais-Deal	4:55 PM	401 Sqd	yes
11/23/41	Obfw.	Mackenstedt	6	3	Spitfire	W of Dunkirk	1:27 PM	315 Sqd	yes
11/23/41	Oblt.	Schneider W.	6 CO	20	Spitfire	W of Dunkirk	1:27 PM	315 Sqd	yes
11/23/41	Ogfr.	Vogt	6	2	Spitfire	W of Dunkirk	1:28 PM	315 Sqd	yes
11/27/41	Uffz.	Christof	1	3	Hurricane	15km W of Boulogne	5:35 PM	607 Sqd	yes
11/27/41	Hptm.	Schöpfel	III CO	36	Hurricane	5km W of Boulogne	5:30 PM	607 Sqd	yes

JG 26 Casualties: 17–27 November 1941

Date	Rank	Name	Cas	Unit	Aircraft	WNR	Mkgs	Place	Time	Cause
11/17/41	Fw.	Fröhlich, Hans-Jürgen	WIFA	2	Bf 109F-4	7227		Clairmarais		take-off
11/22/41	Fw.	Schinabeck, Ignaz	KIA	1	Bf 109F-4	7321		Pihen		Spitfire

11/22/41	Fw.	Knobloch, Karl-Heinz	WIFA 6	FW 190A-1	041	br 2	Bruges-Ostend	crashed
11/27/41	Lt.	Eyler, Theodor	WIFA III St	FW 190A-1	079		Coquelles	crashed

5 December

The men of the Geschwader assembled under cold, gray skies. Reichsmarschall Göring approached, and Gerhard Schöpfel, Galland's successor as Kommodore, gave his report. Göring then climbed a specially-built platform and addressed the men:

"I am pleased today to be able to visit here on the Channel coast the Geschwader that has maintained the watch against England alone, together with Jagdgeschwader 2, while the main forces of the Luftwaffe have had to be employed in the East. The successes of the Geschwader have been great; its losses have been heavy, but unavoidable. The constant duty, the incessant missions call for the utmost effort from the pilots and ground personnel. I intentionally left this outstanding Jagdgeschwader in the West. Certainly I know that it would have scored an enormous number of victories if I had employed it in the East. But the number of victories a Geschwader has gained is not as important as which enemy they have been scored against, and I know that the struggle against the British enemy remains much more difficult than that against the Russians. I was only able to uncover the western front so completely because I had two such outstanding Geschwader to leave behind – and above all, this one of yours . . . I know that it is very difficult to come to grips with the enemy here. He is not far away. He can appear anywhere without a great deal of warning, and it is thus not just the bravery of individuals, but organization and leadership that are necessary for decisive success. I am fully aware that your great success in preventing the British from undertaking any more ambitious tasks can be credited to the leadership of the Geschwader in addition to your bravery and readiness for action.

Today the Geschwader must suffer perhaps its most bitter and difficult hour, since I must take your Kommodore away to place him over the entire fighter arm. But only the best man, the most experienced leader, can rise to become the head of the whole fighter force . . . I know that each of you is proud to have had a chance to fight under such a Kommodore.

I consider this Geschwader to be the very best one that I have. Do continue to hold up this honor and this distinction! Winter is coming, and your difficulties will increase. Nevertheless, you must not let up . . . The fact that the British know that they can accomplish nothing here, even though the Luftwaffe is concentrating on tasks in the East, has affected them deeply. It has been demonstrated to them that it is not the numbers that are decisive, but the men, and the bravery of each individual.

With all my heart, I wish you more victories and further success! And I am certain that you will obtain them, if you approach your duties to the Führer, the German people, and the Reich with the spirit your Kommodore has demonstrated."

Adolf Galland then took his official leave of the Geschwader. With ninety-six victories, he was the most successful German fighter pilot in the West.



Obst. Adolf Galland's change-of-command ceremony, featuring Reichsmarschall Göring and one of Galland's Bf 109F-6/U "Specials". From left: Göring, Galland, Uffz. Johannes Kirches (carrying awards briefcase), Oblt. Rothenberg, Geschwader Adjutant – Audembert, 5 December. (*E.C.P.A.*)

Routine patrols and Alarmstarts were flown from the coastal airfields; they failed to contact the enemy.

6 December

Galland's departure meant promotions for several Geschwader officers, and transfers for others. Major Schöpfel became Kommodore. Hptm. Priller replaced Schöpfel as Kommandeur of the Third Gruppe, and Oblt. Josef Haiböck took over Priller's 1st Staffel. A commander at Gruppe level or above was permitted to choose his own adjutant and the other members of his Stabschwarm; thus Lt. Robert Unzeitig followed Priller to the Third Gruppe to continue as his wingman, displacing Lt. Artur Beese, who joined Haiböck in the 1st Staffel. Oblt. Wilfried Sieling moved with Schöpfel to the Geschwaderstab, and soon became his adjutant; Lt. Hans Luckhardt left the 8th Staffel to join the Stab as Schöpfel's wingman.

Routine patrols and Alarmstarts were flown from the coastal airfields, but failed to contact the RAF.

7 December

Small formations of RAF fighters flew over the Pas de Calais throughout the afternoon. The airborne Luftwaffe patrols were not ordered to attack, but rather to maintain their patrols; apparently no contact was made.

8 December

All three Gruppen were scrambled shortly after noon to intercept an RAF

formation approaching Boulogne from the west. Each Gruppe made contact; each claimed two Spitfires. Over Montreuil Oblt. Mietusch and his wingman, Lt. Walter Thorn, were attacked out of the sun by two No. 603 Sqd. Spitfires. Thorn was hit; he bailed out, but his parachute streamed, and he fell to his death. (The victorious British pilot claimed a Bf 109E, but there were no examples of this model left on the Channel front.) Uffz. Joachim Bleeffe of the First Gruppe Stab hit the ground while maneuvering, but was able to belly-land his Bf 109F on Arques.

Its tour as Führungsstaffel over, the 1st Staffel moved from Audembert to the First Gruppe base at St. Omer-Arques.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 8 December 1941

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
12/8/41	Hptm.	Seifert	I CO	24	Spitfire	near Le Touquet	1:20 PM		yes
12/8/41	Fw.	Willius	3	13	Spitfire	10km W of Boulogne	3:15 PM		yes
12/8/41	Hptm.	Müncheberg	II CO	60	Spitfire	W of Boulogne	2:17 PM		yes
12/8/41	Oblt.	Ebersberger	4 CO	17	Spitfire	Boulogne	1:02 PM		yes
12/8/41	Oblt.	Mietusch	7 CO	14	Spitfire	Berck sur Mer	12:55 PM		yes
12/8/41	Obfw.	Koslowski	9	11	Spitfire	unknown	1:00 PM		yes

JG 26 Casualties: 6–8 December 1941

Date	Rank	Name	Cas	Unit	Aircraft	WNr	Mkgs	Place	Time	Cause
12/6/41	Obfw.	Hoffmann, Hermann	WIFA	5	FW 190A-1	050		Coxyde		crashed
12/8/41	Lt.	Thorn, Walter	KIA	7	FW 190A-1	088	wh 4	S of Montreuil	12:55 PM	Spitfire hit
12/8/41	Uffz.	Bleeffe, Joachim	WIA	I St	Bf 109F-4	8348		Arques		ground

9 December

The coastal Staffeln scrambled to intercept flights of Spitfires. Contact was made, but no claims or losses resulted.

Pilots joining the combat Gruppen from the Ergänzungsgruppe or direct from flight schools before year's end included: First Gruppe: Gefr. Alfred Bickelmann; Second Gruppe: Gefr. Eduard Hämmerle, Uffz. Karl-Heinz Schmeykal; Third Gruppe: Oblt. Elmar Göcke, Fw. Robert Hager, Uffz. Günther Stavenhagen.

11 December

Hptm. Josef Priller, the new Third Gruppe Kommandeur, was assigned a brand-new FW 190A-2 and made nineteen training, patrol, and administrative flights in it before year's end. The RLM's initial doubts about the FW 190 had turned to enthusiasm, and three factories were now turning out FW 190A-2s. Priller and Müncheberg were the first combat pilots to receive them. This new model had a slightly improved engine, the BMW 801C-2 of 1,600 hp, and heavier armament. The FW 190A-1 had been armed with two 7.9mm MG 17 machine guns in the cowlings and two in the wing roots, plus two MG FF cannon in the outer wings. In the A-2, the MG 17s in the wing roots were replaced by potent MG 151/20 machine cannon, timed by newly-developed interrupter gear.

Oblt. Paul Steindl, a professional Luftwaffe officer and pilot, transferred into the Geschwader and was assigned to the First Gruppe Stab.

12–13 December

Routine patrols and Alarmstarts were flown from the coastal airfields, but failed to contact the enemy.

16 December

Hptm. Müncheberg, flying his new FW 190A-2, intercepted a flight of No. 411 Sqd. Spitfires that were escorting an aerial mining operation, and shot down two. Müncheberg's sixty-two aerial victories led the Geschwader; he was followed closely by Hptm. Priller, who had fifty-eight.

17 December

For his first combat mission, the 7th Staffel's Uffz. Oswald Fischer was assigned to fly Oblt. Mietusch's wing. The Staffel intercepted a flight of Spitfires, but were caught beneath them. As Mietusch banked, Fischer could not follow, and fell out of the turn. When he regained control, he was right behind a Spitfire – and shot it down, or so he thought; no RAF combats have been traced.

20 December

A Schwarm of Ergänzungsgruppe Bf 109E-7s took off from Maldeghem on a coastal patrol. Gefr. Hans Beilstein flew as wingman to his instructor, Fw. Jäckel. Beilstein straggled, dove into a cloud, spun out, and crashed near Tilburg. He died in his aircraft.

22 December

The battle cruisers at Brest were now coming under daylight attack by Bomber Command's heavy bombers. In response, II/JG 2 and III/JG 2 left the Channel coast and moved to Brittany. To fill the defensive gap around the Somme Estuary Hptm. Müncheberg's Second Gruppe was ordered to move westward from Wevelghem to Abbeville-Drucat, which had been vacated by II/JG 2. The transfer flight ended in tragedy. Oblt. Walter Schneider, leading his 6th Staffel through heavy fog, became disoriented and flew into a hill. Four of his pilots followed him to their deaths.

JG 26 Casualties: 20–22 December 1941

Date	Rank	Name	Cas	Unit	Aircraft	WNr	Mkgs	Place	Time	Cause
12/20/41	Gefr.	Beilstein, Hans	KIFA	1/E	Bf 109E-7	6355		Donk near Tilburg (NL)	9:50 AM	crashed
12/22/41	Fw.	Tripschu, Karl	KIFA	6	FW 190A-1	006		Herquilinguen	2:00 PM	crashed – weather
12/22/41	Uffz.	Schmeykal, Karl-Heinz	KIFA	6	FW 190A-1	022		near Samer	2:00 PM	crashed – weather
12/22/41	Obfw.	Görbig, Kurt	KIFA	6	FW 190A-1	033	bk 1	near Boulogne	2:00 PM	crashed – weather
12/22/41	Gefr.	Hämmerle, Eduard	KIFA	6	FW 190A-1	091		near Samer	2:00 PM	crashed – weather
12/22/41	Oblt.	Schneider, Walter	KIFA	6 CO	FW 190A-2	217	br 1	Steenvoorde	2:00 PM	crashed – weather

23 December

Routine patrols and Alarmstarts were flown from the coastal airfields, without known result.

Oblt. Otto Behrens was named to succeed Walter Schneider as 6th Staffel Kapitän.



The funeral march to the Abbeville cemetery for Oblt. Walter Schneider, 6th Staffel Kapitän, and four of his pilots, killed on 22 December on the transfer flight from Wevelghem to Abbeville. Front row, from left: Hptm. Müncheberg, Second Gruppe Kommandeur; Obst. Galland, General der Jagdflieger; Major Schöpfel, Geschwader Kommodore. (*Van Boxem via Vanoverbeke*)

The 2nd Staffel replaced the 4th on the small coastal field at Coxyde. The 4th Staffel, which apparently held a semi-permanent position as the Second Gruppe's alert Staffel, did not join the rest of its Gruppe at Abbeville, but moved to the Channel field at Le Touquet.

25 December

Funeral services were held at Abbeville-Drucat for Walter Schneider and his four pilots. The men were buried in the large Luftwaffe cemetery at Abbeville.

28 December

Small formations of RAF fighters flew over the Pas de Calais during the afternoon; Blenheims were also reported. Patrols were flown from the coastal fields and the Ergänzungsgruppe base at Maldegheem. These were not ordered to attack, but to patrol their assigned zones; apparently no contact was made.

29 December

Fighter Command sent several fighter sweeps up and down the Channel. For the most part the German patrols ignored them. The 3rd Staffel's Lt. Karl Schrader claimed a Spitfire over the North Sea, fifty miles north of Ostend.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 16–29 December 1941

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
12/16/41	Hptm.	Müncheberg	II CO	61	Spitfire	NW of Dunkirk	4:01 PM	411 Sqd	yes
12/16/41	Hptm.	Müncheberg	II CO	62	Spitfire	N of Gravelines	4:04 PM	411 Sqd	yes
12/17/41	Uffz.	Fischer	7	1	Spitfire	near Wevelghem		no	
12/29/41	Lt.	Schrader	3	1	Spitfire	80km N of Ostend	3:54 PM	yes	yes

31 December

At year's end, the JG 26 scoreboard for the war to date heavily favored the Schlageret pilots: 916 victory claims had been confirmed (out of about 1,000 submitted) in exchange for ninety-five pilots killed in combat, twenty-two killed in flying accidents, and thirty-four taken prisoner.

Across the Channel, the end of 1941 found Fighter Command at a new peak in strength, controlling an even one hundred squadrons. But the new war in the Pacific, and the galling fact that the true victory/loss ratio for the previous six months was well in the Luftwaffe's favor, compelled the War Cabinet to warn



Adolf Galland's hard-working Bf 109E, W.Nr. 5819, saw its final service in late 1941 as the Ergänzungsgruppe training machine "yellow 16". It carries Hptm. Fromme's Kommandeur chevrons and eighty-two victory bars, Galland's tally in early September. (*Cranston*)

that a more defensive policy was now "a disagreeable necessity". The brakes were applied to the non-stop offensive.

The Schlageter fighters, and the Richthofen Geschwader to their west, had totally disrupted the British air strategy for 1941. Between 14 June and 31 December, Fighter Command lost 411 fighters over the Channel and the continent, while claiming the destruction of 731 Luftwaffe fighters. The true loss to the Germans was only 103 fighters. In all of 1941, JG 26 lost forty-seven pilots killed in combat, seventeen killed in accidents, and three taken prisoner. These casualties, while serious, were certainly sustainable. FW 190A-2s were now beginning to arrive for the re-equipment of the Geschwaderstab and the First Gruppe. The experienced fighter pilots of the Schlageter Geschwader were confident that in the new year their Focke-Wulfs would further increase the German margin of superiority.

Chapter Nine

WINTER ON THE CHANNEL FRONT

January – May 1942

1 January

At the turn of the year the Geschwader was doing very little flying. Its role was defensive, and the Royal Air Force had temporarily halted its daily flights over France. The pilots of the Geschwaderstab and the First Gruppe flew training flights in FW 190s as they became available, and all units practiced formation tactics and, on the rare occasions when this was possible, aerial gunnery. The winter weather restricted the flying of both opponents, but the Germans conducted the closest thing to routine offensive operations. Each morning and evening, weather permitting, JG 26 sent a Rotte to reconnoiter the English coast.

The Stab and the Third Gruppe were to remain on the coastal airfields of Audembert and Coquelles through the winter; conditions there must have been very unpleasant. The small coastal fields at Calais-Marck, Le Touquet, Mardyck, and Coxyde, which had been used in 1941 by the alert Staffeln, would be abandoned over the course of the winter. The First Gruppe, at St. Omer-Arques, and the Second Gruppe, at Abbeville-Drucat, were in relatively good shape. Their bases had concrete runways for use in very bad weather, as well as large, well-drained landing fields for routine operations.

All of these bases had been built during the war, and thus had no permanent installations. Only one type of built-for-the-purpose structure was to be found on most of them – the maintenance hangars. The aircraft were serviced in flat-roofed wooden hangars with a capacity of three or four fighters. Each Staffel dispersal contained several of these hangars, which were covered by huge camouflage nets. The Geschwader and Gruppe command posts and the Staffel ready rooms normally occupied trailers; however, permanent buildings were not passed up if suitable ones were available on-site. The pilots and ground crews were quartered in nearby towns or châteaux. No permanent revetments were available for the aircraft, which were either parked in the open, under netting and the sparse tree cover available near the coast, or in the hangars.

Pilots joining the combat Gruppen this month from the Ergänzungsgruppe or other training units included: First Gruppe: Lt. Georg Greffenius; Second Gruppe: Lt. Helmut Hoppe, Uffz. Wilhelm Mayer, Lt. Georg Rosenblath.

2 January

At least one Alarmstart was carried out; no contact was made.



Uffz. Wilhelm Mayer, soon after joining 6/JG 26 in January from training school. Mayer shot down twenty-seven Allied aircraft on 124 combat sorties before his death on 4 January 1945. He was awarded the Knight's Cross after his death. (Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv)

Sieker's Focke-Wulf was hit in the cockpit, snap-rolled, and crashed into the Channel. Glunz claimed a Spitfire, and an American pilot claimed Glunz as a "probable", but every participant in this combat but Sieker returned to base.

The 9th Staffel's Uffz. Koslowski claimed a Spitfire under unknown circumstances. A First Gruppe Bf 109F-4 was wrecked attempting to take off from Coxyde on what was described as a combat mission; the cause was listed as "weather". Other Alarmstarts were carried out without claims or losses.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 3-9 January 1942

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
1/3/42	Hptm.	Priller	III CO	59	Hurricane	5km NW of Calais	3:38 PM		unk
1/9/42	Fw.	Glunz	4	9	Spitfire	Le Touquet	3:36 PM	71 Sqd	yes
1/9/42	Obfw.	Koslowski	9	12	Spitfire	unknown			unk

3 January

Hptm. Priller saw his first combat since becoming Kommandeur of the Third Gruppe. While on a training flight in his FW 190A-2 he became involved north of Calais with two Spitfires and two Hurricanes, and shot down one Hurricane. His RAF opponent has not been identified, and may have been a member of an ASR flight.

5 January

Routine patrols and Alarmstarts were made; no claims or losses resulted.

9 January

At 1534 Fw. Addi Glunz and his wingman, Uffz. Josef Sieker, scrambled from Le Touquet and gave chase to two Spitfires that had just passed over the field at low altitude. The Spitfires, from No. 71 (Eagle) Squadron, were exiting France after failing to find their Rhubarb's briefed target. Glunz and Sieker caught them, but the American pilots used a defensive scissors maneuver to gain the initiative. After a brief dogfight

10 January

Routine patrols and Alarmstarts were carried out without contacting the RAF. In late afternoon the 4th Staffel abandoned Le Touquet and joined the rest of the Second Gruppe at Abbeville-Drucat.

11 January

Routine patrols and Alarmstarts were carried out. The engine of a Second Gruppe FW 190 failed on what was described as a combat mission and the pilot force-landed on the small field at Berck sur Mer.

14 January

Three formations were scrambled in response to a report of RAF aircraft in mid-Channel. The Allied aircraft apparently never crossed the coast, and the German flights patrolled between Calais and Cap Gris Nez until ordered to land.



The 2nd Staffel's Uffz. Dietze made a single combat flight in one of Kommodore Schöpfel's Geschwader Stab aircraft – Coxyde, 14 January. (*Dietze via Meyer*)

24 January

Lt. Hans Schneider of the Second Gruppe Stab crash-landed the Gruppe's K1 35B-1 on Berck sur Mer after its engine failed. Schneider was injured in the crash.

JG 26 Casualties: 9–24 January 1942

Date	Rank	Name	Cas	Unit	Aircraft	WNr	Mkgs	Place	Time	Cause
1/9/42	Uffz.	Sieker, Josef	K1A	4	FW 190A-1	076		N of Le Touquet	3:40 PM	Spitfire
1/24/42	Lt.	Schneider, Hans	WIFA	II St	K1 35B-1	4169		Berck sur Mer a/f		engine

26 January

Obfw. Max Martin returned to duty with the 8th Staffel after a lengthy hospital stay for a wound suffered the previous September.

The 6th Staffel's Uffz. Wilhelm Mayer made his first four flights in an FW 190, all touch-and-goes from Abbeville.

27 January

In his first major decision as General der Jagdflieger, Oberst Galland ordered all of the *Ergänzungsstaffeln* disbanded. Each Jagdgeschwader had been operating at least one; Galland had been responsible for setting up the first *Ergänzungsstaffel* in JG 26, but had decided that they were inefficient. The individual units were consolidated into three *Ergänzungsjagdgruppen* under the RLM. Operational training thus gained a degree of consistency throughout the fighter arm. The manpower freed up was sufficient to staff a new first-line Jagdgruppe, IV/JG 1. In his daily orders Major Schöpfel commended the work of the JG 26 *Ergänzungsgruppe*, which had supplied 187 trained pilots to JG 26 and seven to other units.

The Second Staffel left Coxyde and joined the rest of the First Gruppe at St. Omer-Arques.

28 January

Adolf Hitler presented Adolf Galland with the Knight's Cross with Oak Leaves, Swords, and Diamonds, the Wehrmacht's new highest award for bravery. Galland was the second recipient after Werner Mölders.

2 February

Oblt. Walter Otte left the Geschwader for a tour of duty at a training school. Oblt. Johannes Schmidt succeeded him as Kapitän of the 3rd Staffel.

Oblt. Wilhelm Gäth, a professional officer and pilot, joined the Geschwader after service at a training school, and was assigned to the Geschwader Stab.

8 February

Routine patrols and Alarmstarts were carried out without contacting the RAF.

11 February

In the morning two Geschwader formations were scrambled in response to RAF aircraft reported in the Ostend-Dunkirk area. The Allied aircraft apparently never crossed the coast, and the German flights patrolled between Le Touquet and Cap Gris Nez until ordered to land. Routine patrols were then conducted until nightfall.

In the afternoon Major Schöpfel was informed that the General der Jagdflieger was en route to the JG 26 command post to conduct a briefing. Schöpfel's Gruppe and Staffel leaders were to attend, as were those of JG 2 and also JG 1, which was normally stationed in northern Germany. For the past few weeks the Geschwader's daily routine had been interrupted by unusual orders detailing away a number of staff personnel, especially communications specialists, and calling for supply dumps to be set up at several coastal airfields. Obviously, something out of the ordinary was going on, but no one at the Geschwader level, not even Kommodore Schöpfel, had been let in on the plan.

Oberst Galland soon arrived from Germany in a Ju 52. His news was indeed extraordinary. In a few hours, the battle cruisers *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* and the heavy cruiser *Prinz Eugen* were to leave Brest and make for Germany through the English Channel. The ship movement had been ordered by Hitler himself. Galland had argued for a night-time departure, which would bring the ships into the Straits of Dover in broad daylight. He reasoned that the first part of the voyage could probably be made in secret, and that based on recent

experience, the Jagdgeschwader along the Channel could fend off the RAF's attacks during daylight. Galland further believed that the very audacity of a daylight passage would work in its favor, given the fondness of the British for complete planning and their consequent slowness to react to unanticipated situations. This argument won the day, and Hitler rewarded the brash young colonel with command of the air aspects of the operation, which was codenamed *Donnerkeil* (Thunderbolt).

Galland's forces comprised only 252 day fighters – the full strength of JG 1, JG 2, JG 26, and the fighter school in Paris – plus a few night fighters. The success of the operation would be possible only if secrecy could be maintained until the last possible moment – that is, until the fleet was in the Channel itself. Galland did all of the planning himself, in his Berlin office. The Luftwaffe personnel necessary to man fighter control staffs on the ships were assembled under various subterfuges and smuggled aboard, along with the necessary communications equipment. For continuous daylight coverage the fighter escorts would need to parallel the ships' course, land on fields to the east of their original take-off point, refuel, and return to escort duty – some units as many as three times.

Galland's plan was laid out in great precision. It called for continuous escort by four *Schwärme*, two at low and two at high altitude. One of each pair of *Schwärme* would be on the English side of the formation, and the other would be on the French side. Each *Schwarm* was to fly in broad figure eights along the length of the formation. All aircraft were to fly at minimum altitude and in complete radio silence until the code words "open visor" were received, at which time the fighters were to begin an immediate climb to their patrol altitude. The sixteen aircraft were to remain over the ships for thirty minutes. Relief was to take place over the naval formation, so there would be a ten-minute overlap. Ramming was authorized if necessary to prevent enemy aircraft from approaching the ships. A small reserve force was held at cockpit readiness, but any ship damaged severely enough to cause it to fall behind the formation would have to be left unprotected, as the fighter force was too few in numbers to cover two areas simultaneously.

At the end of the briefing, Galland announced that he would command the air operation from Schöpfel's own Audembert command post. Gerhard Schöpfel then left for the Third Gruppe's base at Coquelles. Since he had no command function in the forthcoming operation, he would lead his old unit in combat. The formation leaders returned to their bases to brief their own pilots, who were then confined to their quarters until the next morning. Guards were posted at the barracks doors to ensure that no one entered or left.

The German fleet weighed anchor and left Brest at 2245. The departure had been delayed three hours by an untimely Bomber Command raid on Brest, but was unobserved by the British submarine screen.

12 February – Operation *Donnerkeil*

During the fleet movement Oberst Max Ibel, Jafü 3 in Brest, served as "Jafü Schiff" aboard the *Scharnhorst*. His diary of the operation, plus the British Board of Enquiry's report and the usual JG 26 sources (logbooks, claims listings, loss reports) permit a minute-by-minute summary of the day's activity:

0600: Reveille for the JG 26 pilots. The weather is very bad – rain and low

clouds at 300 to 400 feet; visibility beneath the clouds is about 800 to 1,000 feet.

0814: The first protection Schwarm of the day, four Bf 110 night fighters, takes off from Abbeville.

0850: The Bf 110s reach the fleet, which is now north of Cherbourg, and take position on the port (English) side.

0920: Fifteen Bf 110s take off from Abbeville.

0921: Eleven Bf 109s from the Jagdfliegerschule 5 Einsatzstaffel, normally based on Villacoublay, take off from an unspecified base, probably Octeville.

0925: The fleet is now north of Le Havre, unseen and unsuspected by the British. The RAF's routine early-morning reconnaissance of Brest had missed the formation's departure owing to equipment defects and a good German smokescreen. The routine Channel patrols sight only German torpedo boats (S-boats). Radar reports of low-altitude enemy air activity in the Channel are attributed to ASR operations.

0949: Twelve II/JG 26 FW 190s [including Glunz] take off from Abbeville on the Gruppe's first mission.

0950: Ten Bf 109s and nineteen Bf 110s are on station around the ships.

1018: Sixteen II/JG 26 FW 190s [including Mayer] take off from Abbeville on the Gruppe's second mission.

1045: Sixteen I/JG 26 Bf 109s take off from Arques on the Gruppe's first mission.

1100: British radar reports enemy aircraft circling a specific area, moving eastward at 20 to 25 knots. No. 11 Group orders additional reconnaissance missions.

1103: The second II/JG 26 mission lands on Abbeville.

1108: Sixteen I/JG 26 Bf 109s take off from Arques on the Gruppe's second mission.

1110: G/C Beamish, the Kenley station commander, takes off with his wingman for an independent Rhubarb to the French coast.

1114: The first II/JG 26 mission lands on Abbeville.

1125: Two No. 91 Sqd. Spitfires take off from Hawkinge on the reconnaissance mission ordered at 1100.

1125: G/C Beamish follows two Bf 109s to the fleet and correctly identifies all of its vessels, but "following standing orders", does not break radio silence to report the largest formation of enemy shipping seen in the Channel since the Spanish Armada.

1135: The No. 91 Sqd. flight leader sights and reports the fleet. The radio message is intercepted by the Germans and immediately reported to Galland. He delays giving the order "open visor", however, believing correctly that the British will take some time to react to the sighting.

1200: The No. 91 Sqd. report reaches the headquarters of No. 11 Group and Vice-Admiral Dover.

1209: G/C Beamish lands and reports to No. 11 Group.

1215: Fifteen III/JG 26 FW 190s begin taking off from Coquelles on the Gruppe's first mission [Fischer, Pistor].



Operation Donnerkeil – the Channel Dash – as depicted by a German war artist. Here a Third Gruppe Focke-Wulf brings down a Swordfish. (*Naumann*)

1224: The RAF radio intercept (Y-intercept) service logs its first message from Jafü 2: a fighter patrol operating between Calais and Dunkirk is ordered to return to base. The Jafü is maintaining its routine daily patrols and radio traffic. This small deception delays the RAF's already dilatory response by no more than a minute. The Jafü 2 fighters patrolling the fleet continue to operate in complete radio silence.

1225: The Kenley flight's report is logged in at No. 11 Group, which orders all fighter squadrons brought to readiness and notifies other Commands.

1231: Two III/JG 26 FW 190s scramble from Coquelles [Martin, Starke]. This is documented as an Alarmstart rather than a late take-off for the fleet patrol, implying that they took off to intercept a suspected RAF intruder.

1250: The fleet passes Cap Gris Nez.

1253: Sixteen III/JG 26 FW 190s take off from Coquelles on the Gruppe's second mission [Naumann, P. Galland, Koslowski, Stavenhagen]. The fleet is just off the coast and can be seen immediately after take-off.

1315: Sixteen II/JG 26 FW 190s begin taking off from Abbeville on the Gruppe's third mission [Mayer].

1316: The Dover coastal batteries open fire on the fleet.

1318: The first III/JG 26 mission lands on Coquelles.

1319: Royal Navy motor torpedo boats (MTBs) attack the German S-boats and destroyers screening the port side of the fleet.

1320: After taking their escort positions, the two III/JG 26 Schwärme to the port side of the fleet fly between the dueling surface forces, under orders not to fire on surface targets.

1320: The only British air unit in England specifically trained to attack enemy capital ships, the six Swordfish of No. 825 Squadron's Manston detachment, take off. Of the five No. 11 Group squadrons assigned as escorts, only No. 72's ten Spitfires make rendezvous. After circling for a few minutes the Swordfish head out to sea, screened closely by the ten fighters.

1334: The *Prinz Eugen* opens fire on Swordfish approaching from 240°.

1340: The 4th Staffel's Fw. Glunz, delayed by aircraft problems, takes off alone from Abbeville on his second mission of the day.

1340: Nos. 124 and 401 Squadrons, two of the squadrons that had missed the Swordfish, sight big ships 10 miles north of Calais, and are immediately attacked by German fighters.

1340: No. 72 Sqd. maintains close escort of the Swordfish until the latter begin their torpedo runs, at which time the Spitfires are fully engaged with JG 2 Bf 109s and two Schwärme of III/JG 26 FW 190s.

1344: The *Gneisenau*'s 150cm secondary battery opens fire on the approaching Swordfish. Schwärme of JG 2 Bf 109s attack the Swordfish head-on from close range.

1345: The Dover coastal batteries cease fire after thirty-four rounds owing to the presence in the target area of Swordfish and Royal Navy MTBs.

1345: Two Schwärme of III/JG 26 FW 190s, at the southern end of their last patrol leg, sight the Swordfish in the distance and open fire at extreme range, c. 1,000 yards. Oblt. Naumann sees his target pull up sharply, fall off over its right wing and crash into the Channel. The other Schwarmführer, Lt. Paul Galland, claims a second Swordfish, and two minutes later Naumann claims a third.

1348: Jafü Schiff requests permission to assume control of the fighter defenses.

1349: The last of the six Swordfish crashes into the Channel. Although several torpedoes are dropped, none finds a target. Of the eighteen Swordfish crewmen only five survive to be pulled from the Channel by Royal Navy light craft. The German ships are ultimately credited with downing six Swordfish. JG 2 claim ten, of which seven are confirmed; JG 26's three are all confirmed.

1350: Galland issues the order "open visor", ending radio silence and authorizing the fighters to climb to any altitude required by the tactical situation.

1350: Jafü Schiff signals the General der Jagdflieger on the "Galland line", *re* the Swordfish attack: "Two Red attacks at 1345 and 1347 hours were taken care of by the Blue defenders in comradeship with their nephews."

1350: The 8th Staffel's Obfw. Martin lands on Coquelles. His wingman Obfw. Starke has been lost during the mission – possibly striking the water – and does not return.

1400: The second III/JG 26 mission lands on Coquelles. Two 9th Staffel pilots, Obfw. Eduard Koslowski and Uffz. Günther Stavenhagen, do not return. They are probably the victims of No. 72 Squadron, which claims 3-0-4 FW 190s for no losses.



Third Gruppe Focke-Wulfs strafe British motor torpedo boats in the Channel during the afternoon of 12 February. (Naumann)

1417: The Y-intercept service detects two controls, one aboard ship, directing the fleet protection operations.

1425: The fleet passes out of range of the British coastal radar stations. The British will no longer know its position with certainty. Continuous reconnaissance is not possible owing to the German fighter screen and the weather.

1447: Sixteen III/JG 2 Bf 109s take off, probably from Calais-Marck, and within eight minutes are in combat with Whirlwinds and escorting Spitfires.

1503: Twenty-two German fighters are reported in position over the fleet.

1503: The 4th Staffel's Fw. Glunz lands on Abbeville after his lone sortie. He had approached a

formation of twenty-five Spitfires in the belief that it was his own Gruppe, realizing his error too late to reverse course. He later related to a correspondent, "I burst into the middle of the formation with my guns firing, attempting to break up the enemy's attack. With one Spitfire it became a matter of life or death. I sweated myself dry, but I was rewarded, for my splendid FW 190 took not a single hit. Nevertheless, the five-minute battle seemed like an eternity."

1505: The third II/JG 26 mission lands on Abbeville.

1515: Sixteen I/JG 2 Bf 109s take off from an unstated location.

1516: I/JG 26 Bf 109s take off from Arques on the Gruppe's third mission [Babenz, Fast, Fröhlich, Pilkenroth, Uiberacker].

1520: The first of three waves of Bomber Command aircraft take off from their bases. The bombers, flying in vics of three, are soon split up by the weather. They are armed only with general-purpose bombs, as they are flying too low for armor-piercing bombs to arm, and their attacks are intended to facilitate proper attacks by Coastal Command and destroyers. No hits are scored by any of the bombers.

1530: The 3rd Staffel's Fw. Heinrich Pilkenroth is shot down and killed near Calais by a Spitfire, probably from No. 401 Squadron, which flew a successful patrol along the coast from Dunkirk to Calais, claiming 2-0-2 Bf 109s for the loss of one pilot later reported a prisoner.

1530: The fleet flagship *Scharnhorst* hits a mine, loses power, and drifts to a stop. A destroyer comes alongside and takes off the fleet commander and Obst. Ibel and the fighter staff; the rest of the fleet proceeds eastward, as ordered.



A war correspondent interviews Geschwader pilots after Operation Donnerkeil. Lt. Naumann is seated; the pilots in white jackets are Uffz. Vogt and Oblt. Ruppert. (*Naumann*)

1530: The weather, which had improved in early afternoon, suddenly deteriorates – light rain is now falling from a continuous cloud deck at 500 feet. Visibility on the surface is about one mile.

1546: III/JG 26 FW 190s take off from Coquelles on the Gruppe's third mission [Fischer, Pistor]. Forced to keep their distance from the fleet by anti-aircraft fire, a 7th Staffel Schwarm shoots down three Spitfires from a formation of six, and then downs two Wellingtons approaching from France, but the claims are apparently not filed.

1550: After brief attacks on fleeting targets appearing in and out of the overcast, First Gruppe pilots claim two Hampdens, a Spitfire, and a Hurricane.

1600: Twelve III/JG 26 FW 190s take off from Coquelles on the Gruppe's fourth mission [Ragotzi, Martin]. Their specific mission is to defend the fleet against attacks by torpedo bombers.

1610: Sixteen II/JG 2 Bf 109s take off, probably from Calais-Marck.

1620: The 8th Staffel's Oblt. Ragotzi claims a Spitfire. Coastal Command Hudsons and Beauforts make uncoordinated torpedo attacks on the fleet, scoring no hits.

1640: Sixteen II/JG 2 Bf 109s take off from an unstated base, possibly Ostend.

1643: JG 1 fighters make their first appearance over the fleet; they claim several Spitfires and bombers over the next hour.

1644: The Dover flotilla of twenty-year-old destroyers attacks the German fleet. HMS *Worcester* is damaged, but reaches port under her own power.

1648: The third III/JG 26 mission lands on Woensdrecht. It is now snowing.

The FW 190s skid across the field out of control, and are abandoned wherever they finally come to a stop. None is seriously damaged, but no servicing is attempted until morning.

1652: The fourth III/JG 26 mission lands on Coquelles.

1656: Eleven III/JG 2 Bf 109s take off from an unspecified base.

1700: II/JG 26 FW 190s take off from Abbeville on the Gruppe's fourth mission [Glunz].

1708: Fw. Glunz shoots down a Spitfire east of Eu.

1730: Eight Bf 110 night fighters take off from Coxyde.

1738: In the last known fighter combat of the day, a pilot of IV/JG 1 shoots down a Spitfire.

1740: The Second Gruppe's fourth mission lands on Abbeville.

1831: The *Gneisenau* suffers a mechanical problem and is forced to reduce speed temporarily.

1935: With the onset of total darkness, all fighter activity ceases.

2055: The *Gneisenau* hits a mine and slows to 25 knots.

2237: The *Scharnhorst*, which has gotten steam up and is trailing the fleet, strikes another mine and slows to 10 to 15 knots.

By midnight the *Gneisenau* and the Prinz Eugen had reached the Elbe River and sanctuary; the *Scharnhorst* followed at 1030 the next morning. No British shell, bomb, or torpedo had touched a German ship.

According to the OKW communiqué, seven aerial victories were confirmed and six probables were recorded for JG 26 pilots. The British lost seventeen fighters, twenty RAF bombers, and the six Fleet Air Arm Swordfish. Seven fighters were lost or written off from the three Jagdgeschwader engaged; the only pilots lost were four from JG 26. Operationally, the German victory had been complete, and the damage to British prestige, incalculable. After the war, Adolf Galland called the operation the “greatest hour” of his career. The end result, however, was a strategic defeat for the German Navy, which had by its own action bottled up its capital ships in home waters.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 12 February 1942

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
2/12/42	Lt.	Uiberacker	G. 1	4	Hurricane	50km SW of Vlissingen	4:00 PM	607 Sqd	yes
2/12/42	Uffz.	Fast	2	2	Hampden	25km NW of Dunkirk	3:50 PM		yes
2/12/42	Fw.	Fröhlich	2	5	Hampden	30km SW of Ostend	3:55 PM		no
2/12/42	Fw.	Babenz	3	9	Spitfire	30km N of Dunkirk			no
2/12/42	Fw.	Glunz	4	10	Spitfire	East of Eu	5:08 PM	118+234 Sqd	yes
2/12/42	Lt.	Galland P.	8	4	Swordfish	N of Gravelines	1:45 PM	825 Sqd	yes
2/12/42	Oblt.	Ragotzi	8	1	Spitfire	unknown	4:20 PM		yes
2/12/42	Oblt.	Naumann	9	5	Swordfish	N of Gravelines	1:45 PM	825 Sqd	yes
2/12/42	Oblt.	Naumann	9	6	Swordfish	N of Gravelines	1:47 PM	825 Sqd	yes

JG 26 Casualties: 12 February 1942

Date	Rank	Name	Cas	Unit	Aircraft	WNr	Mkgs	Place	Time	Cause
2/12/42	Fw.	Pilkenroth, Heinrich	KIA	3	Bf 109F-4	13007	wh 3	Dunkirk-Ostend	3:30 PM	Spitfire

2/12/42	Obfw.	Starke, Henri	KIA	9	FW 190A-1	089	yl 4	W of Boulogne	1:20 PM	unknown
2/12/42	Uffz.	Stavenhagen, Günther	KIA	9	FW 190A-1	042	yl 12	N of Calais	1:30 PM	Spitfire
2/12/42	Obfw.	Koslowski, Eduard	KIA	9	FW 190A-2	2068	yl 1	N of Calais	1:30 PM	Spitfire

13 February

From noon several German formations were scrambled in response to RAF aircraft reported over the Channel. No attacks were ordered by the controllers, which today numbered two, according to the British Y-Service. The units of the Geschwader could now be directed by their own command posts; this added redundancy and a measure of efficiency to the command and control system. In the future, interceptions west of Cap Gris Nez were often controlled from Abbeville, while those to the east were controlled from Audembert or St. Omer.

While scrambling from Coquelles, the 8th Staffel's Uffz. Alfred Dovnar was caught in a crosswind. He could not control his FW 190, which crashed into a farm building and burned, killing him.

14 February

Again today German formations were scrambled in response to RAF aircraft reported over the Channel, but no attacks were ordered or carried out. After a combat flight a First Gruppe pilot was forced to crash-land on Coquelles owing to a mechanical problem with his Bf 109F.

15 February

After a No. 452 Sqd. Rhubarb crossed the coast at Le Touquet a 2nd Staffel patrol was ordered to intercept it. Lt. Hans Dippel caught the four Spitfires and shot one into the Channel west of Cap Gris Nez. Other patrols and Alarmstarts were flown, but met with no success.

16 February

Routine patrols and Alarmstarts were carried out without claims or losses.

19 February

German patrols paralleled, but did not intercept, small flights of RAF aircraft reported over the Channel.

Oblt. Rothenberg transferred from the Geschwader. Oblt. Wilfried Sieling replaced him as Geschwader adjutant.

21 February

The 2nd Staffel's Uffz. Gottfried Dietze made his first two FW 190 familiarization flights from St. Omer-Arques.

24 February

Routine patrols and Alarmstarts were carried out. The 9th Staffel's Obfw. Erwin Busch claimed a Spitfire at 1320; his opponent was probably a No. 92 Sqd. Spitfire that reached England before crashing.

28 February

With improved weather, the pace of operations increased. In mid-afternoon a 9th Staffel patrol pursued a fighter formation to mid-Channel and downed a

Spitfire. A little later a bomber formation was reported over the Channel. This proved to be six Blenheims en route to bomb the Ostend U-boat pens. The First and Third Gruppen intercepted the raid as it returned over the Channel. One escorting Spitfire went down. The Blenheims reached England safely, although all sustained flak damage. This proved to be Bomber Command's last Blenheim raid.

The office of the General der Jagdflieger issued new guidelines for operational fighter training. Three Ergänzungsjagdgruppen and one Ergänzungszerstörergruppe had been established. The Gruppe at Cazaux, Ergänzungsjagdgruppe West, was now responsible for supplying pilots to JG 26 and also to JG 1, JG 2, and JG 5.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 15–28 February 1942

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
2/15/42	Lt.	Dippel	2	5	Spitfire	15km W of Cap Gris Nez	11:00 AM	452 Sqd	yes
2/24/42	Obfw.	Busch E.	9	7	Spitfire	unknown	1:20 PM	92 Sqd	yes
2/28/42	Lt.	Aistleitner	1	5	Spitfire	20km NE of Margate		401 Sqd	unk
2/28/42	Oblt.	Ruppert K.	9 CO	11	Spitfire	N of Calais	2:37 PM	316 Sqd	yes

3 March

Winston Churchill authorized the resumption of raids over France, with the admonition that Fighter Command was expected to destroy German aircraft “plane for plane”. No new tactics had been developed, and Air Marshal Sholto Douglas was thus obliged to order a replay of the previous fall’s massive raids and sweeps. Air Vice-Marshal Leigh-Mallory’s No. 11 Group squadrons were still flying the Spitfire Vb. Their most frequent opponent, Jagdgeschwader 26, would be equipped exclusively with FW 190A-1s and A-2s once the First Gruppe surrendered the last of its Bf 109Fs in early April. The level of combat skill in Fighter Command had dropped sharply as experienced pilots were ordered away to reinforce the Middle Eastern and Far Eastern theaters. Across the Channel, the combat skills of the average German pilot had never been greater, as the Circuses of 1941 had given the Germans much valuable experience at minimal cost. The qualitative superiority of the Jagdwaffe over its western enemies was at its zenith.

Fighter Command sent one wing on a feint sweep along the Channel. All three JG 26 Gruppen were scrambled, but apparently only the First Gruppe made contact, and it filed no claims and sustained no losses. In a summary document supplied to Archibald Sinclair, the British Air Minister, Sholto Douglas stated that Fighter Command claimed 1-0 German fighters while losing one airplane and no pilots.

4 March

Routine patrols were flown. A First Gruppe FW 190 was damaged while taxiing out to take off from Arques on a combat mission.

8 March

The Geschwader apparently did not fly in the morning, but the 2nd Staffel’s Uffz. Dietze took part in an unusual reconnaissance mission in mid-afternoon – he was up for only one half hour, barely sufficient to reach England and return,



During the winter of 1941–42 the First Gruppe flew both FW 190s and Bf 109s. This is a fine shot of a 2nd Staffel Bf 109F-4 being warmed up on Arques in March. (*Dietze via Meyer*)

but received credit for a combat sortie. The details are unfortunately lacking. One hour later he was scrambled to defend against 1942's first major raid, Circus No. 112, which sent twenty-four Bostons in three separate formations to bomb Comines, Abbeville, and Poissy. The escort comprised twenty-one fighter squadrons from No. 11 Group and at least two from No. 12 Group. The Jafü treated the multi-part operation as if it were a single Circus. The three Gruppen were all scrambled at 1700 and all were ordered to Dunkirk at 1716 to intercept the withdrawing raiders. The First Gruppe met the North Weald Wing just off shore. Lt. Artur Beese dove through the formation alone and picked off the wing commander. Lt. Gottfried Helmholz and his wingman followed, and settled on a pair of No. 403 Sqd. Spitfires. Helmholz shot his target down, but his wingman Ogfr. Albert Übel, who was on his first combat mission, missed, and was downed in flames by his intended target. The 3rd Staffel struck another unit in the wing, No. 121 (Eagle) Squadron, and claimed two Spitfires; one in fact went down.

No. 12 Group's Digby Wing had the rear cover assignment, and sighted no enemy aircraft until the Circus bombers and escort had passed it. No. 609 Squadron then spotted FW 190s below, and dove on them from the west, out of the sun. The 8th Staffel's Fw. Gottfried Weber was hit and crashed from 23,000 feet; no RAF aircraft sustained damage. The Second Gruppe failed to make contact. Two of its FW 190s collided while landing on Abbeville and sustained moderate damage.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 8 March 1942

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
3/8/42	Lt.	Beese	1	3	Spitfire	near Dunkirk	5:15 PM	N Weald Wing	yes
3/8/42	Lt.	Helmholz	2	3	Spitfire	30km NW of Dunkirk	5:21 PM	403 Sqd	unk
3/8/42	Fw.	Babenz	3	10	Spitfire	SE of Bergues	5:21 PM	121 Sqd	unk
3/8/42	Lt.	Schauder	3	10	Spitfire	2km W of Bergues	5:23 PM	121 Sqd	yes

JG 26 Casualties: 13 February – 8 March 1942

Date	Rank	Name	Cas	Unit	Aircraft	WNr	Mkgs	Place	Time	Cause
2/13/42	Uffz.	Dovnar, Alfred	KIFA	8	FW 190A-1	057		Coquelles	2:30 PM	take-off
3/8/42	Ogfr.	Übel, Albert	KIA	2	Bf 109F-4	8342	bk 9	E of Dunkirk		Spitfire
3/8/42	Fw.	Weber, Gottfried	KIA	8	FW 190A-1	092	bk 10	20km N of Calais	5:30 PM	Spitfire

9 March

The Gosnay power station was the target for Circus No. 113's six Bostons. The First Gruppe attacked the close escort west of Béthune, but without result. The Second Gruppe, controlled from its own Abbeville command post, was ordered to Boulogne and met the main force as it withdrew. The Focke-Wulf pilots claimed four Spitfires off the coast; the close escort and escort cover wings lost 3-2 Spitfires and three pilots. The Geschwader sustained no losses.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 9 March 1942

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
3/9/42	Fw.	Philipp	4	11	Spitfire	Boulogne	4:45 PM		yes
3/9/42	Obfw.	Mackenstedt	6	4	Spitfire	near Drionville	4:27 PM		unk
3/9/42	Lt.	Leuschel	6	1	Spitfire	15km SW of Boulogne	4:40 PM		unk
3/9/42	Lt.	Weiss	6	2	Spitfire	4km W of Boulogne	4:40 PM		yes

10 March

The failure of the Wehrmacht to defeat the Soviet Union before winter ensured the continuation of a multi-front war well into 1942. To maintain offensive pressure on Britain by day, the German High Command decided to resume the fighter-bomber raids that had met with some success in the final period of the Battle of Britain. This time the Luftwaffe decided to set up new specialist units for the task, rather than dilute the strength of the pure fighter units then stationed in France. On this date Luftflotte 3 ordered the establishment of two Jagdbomber (or "Jabo") Staffeln, one in each of the Channel Jagdgeschwader. They were designated 10(Jabo)/JG 2 and 10(Jabo)/JG 26. The latter Staffel was subordinated to I/JG 26 for administration, and at first was based with it on St. Omer-Arques. Pilots with 1940 fighter-bomber experience were sought out for the new unit, and one such pilot, Obfw. Erwin Busch, did arrive from the 9th Staffel. However, when given the opportunity, seasoned units will always palm off problem personnel on newly established ones. The first Kapitän of the JG 26 Jabostaffel was Hptm. Karl Plunser, a former Staffel Kapitän in the JG 26 Ergänzungsgruppe who was said to be afflicted with "Kanalkrankheit", or Channel sickness. The 2nd Staffel sent him Fw. Hans-Jürgen Fröhlich, a wildly undisciplined pilot, and the 7th Staffel donated Uffz. Oswald Fischer, who had ensured Oblt. Mietusch's enmity by laughing aloud when his Kapitän fell off a horse.

The JG 26 Jabostaffel began operations immediately, with only four pilots. On its first Jabo mission – the date is unfortunately unknown – the Schwarm attacked a factory in Folkestone and sustained a few holes from light anti-aircraft fire. While building up their strength they served as the "Holzauge" or high cover Staffel for their First Gruppe hosts' intercept missions. (Holzauge, or wooden-eye, was a nickname for "lookout" that German pilots had brought back from the Spanish war.)

12 March

The German Navy was passing a convoy through the Channel, and the Gruppen sent Schwärme to escort it in overlapping shifts. These were uneventful, but the 8th Staffel's Fw. Willi Kalitski was forced to return early from one with a bad engine, and totalled his FW 190 in a rough forced landing near Ostend.

13 March

The German air defense network in France and Belgium now rivalled Britain's in effectiveness – a remarkable accomplishment, achieved in just one year. A successful defense of the coastal region required the earliest warning possible; this was the responsibility of the radio intercept service and the Freya early warning radars that were now thick along the coast. A second chain of Freyas was located thirty to fifty miles inland. Bearings from the two chains allowed a continuous estimation of the location of enemy formations once they had crossed the coast. The FW 190s of formation leaders were equipped with FuG 25a IFF (Identification, Friend from Foe) equipment. This device contained a receiver which detected the Freya beams, and a transmitter which then responded with a timed signal. This signal altered the shape of the pulse displayed by the Freya receiver, permitting the fighter control unit to distinguish friendly formations from enemy. Interceptions were normally controlled by Jafü 2, but often in this period the responsibility was delegated to the operations room of JG 26 or to the Gruppe command posts. A command network ensured the rapid, simultaneous transmission of orders. All messages from the Geschwader operations room were sent via land line to radio equipment which was located in each Gruppe command post, and which remained turned on during all periods of readiness. All incoming messages were rebroadcast over an extensive network of loudspeakers located in the Gruppe command post, in the Staffel ready rooms, and around the airfields. Thus every pilot could hear the assembly point and altitude, and the latest estimate of the tactical situation, while awaiting his order to take off.

RAF formations approached the French coast in the morning and early afternoon, bringing up the defenders, but no contact was made. Shortly before 1600 hours all of the Geschwader's units were scrambled on reports of RAF aircraft southwest of Gravelines, north of St. Omer, and west of Hazebrouck. This was Circus No. 114. Its eight Bostons bombed the Hazebrouck rail yards, escorted or supported by fourteen Spitfire squadrons. The Biggin Hill Wing, flying a forward sweep, caught the Second Gruppe still in its climb. Two squadrons dove on the Focke-Wulfs, whose pilots rolled into the attack and quickly brought down three Spitfires without loss. The survivors and the wing's high cover squadron were then chased back toward England by the Focke-Wulfs.

Pilots of the Kenley Wing, flying as high cover to the main formation, saw enemy fighters below them just after passing the target and dove to the attack. After a lengthy battle with the Third Gruppe, the wing returned to England claiming 5-1-2 FW 190s for the loss of one Spitfire. Oblt. Borris downed the Spitfire, but the Gruppe suffered no losses and recorded no damage to its Focke-Wulfs.

The First Gruppe caught the withdrawing main formation halfway between Hazebrouck and the coast. Its Messerschmitts dove on the Northolt Wing close escorts by Schwärme, out of the western sun. One of the Polish Spitfires went down, but the bombers were not reached. One Bf 109F-4 force-landed at

Dunkirk after the battle with moderate combat damage. This was the Geschwader's only reportable combat loss of the day; it suffered no casualties.

At 1623 the controller ordered all fighters not engaged with the enemy to return to base. The recall did not apply to several Second Gruppe pilots, who had finally caught the retiring Spitfires halfway across the Dover Straits. Two pilots claimed victories that could not be confirmed because they were not witnessed. The Spitfire of No. 401 Squadron's leader was damaged so badly that he was forced to bail out over England. The last victory was claimed at 1629 by Addi Glunz, who had made a lone attack on fifteen Spitfires from above, but had broken off the action when his cockpit suddenly became unbearably hot. Back at Abbeville it was found that two of his exhaust pipes had burned through, allowing the exhaust to enter the cockpit; he was lucky that he had not been asphyxiated.

The Geschwader's only other loss was not combat-related. Uffz. Otto Grohmann's FW 190 crashed while taking off from Abbeville for a practice flight. Grohmann was not injured.

Fighter Command's victory claims, while not excessive by the standards of 1941, brought Air Marshal Sholto Douglas a mild rocket in the form of a personal letter from Air Chief Marshal Portal, Chief of the Air Staff:

“In the fighting yesterday we claimed eight German fighters destroyed plus four probables for the loss of six and I see from today's German communiqué that they claim to have lost nothing. I do not know how they get away with this . . . As you well know I have implicit faith in the genuineness of the claims put forward by your pilots . . . but it would help me if you could obtain for me a report of the actual evidence of the destruction of, say, two or three of the best authenticated German casualties.”

Sholto Douglas's reply was brief enough to verge on curtness. He sent Portal three combat reports: two from the Kenley Wing and one from Northolt. Two of the German aircraft were seen to hit the ground, and the third pilot bailed out. Portal professed to be satisfied. It can be stated unequivocally that none of these crashes occurred. The Luftwaffe loss totals in the daily OKW communiqué have been confirmed repeatedly post-war by two internal, independent sources – the Luftwaffe personnel loss and material loss files. Sholto Douglas may have deliberately selected examples from wings that already had reputations within No. 11 Group for overclaiming; the Kenley Wing would continue to lead Fighter Command in the number of victory claims that today are wholly unverifiable.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 13 March 1942

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
3/13/42	Hptm.	Seifert	I CO	25	Spitfire	SW of Dunkirk	4:15 PM	303 Sqd	unk
3/13/42	Fw.	Adam H-G.	2	4	Spitfire	40km SW of Dunkirk	4:10 PM	303 Sqd	yes
3/13/42	Hptm.	Müncheberg	II CO	63	Spitfire	Wirre Effroy	4:17 PM	124 Sqd	yes
3/13/42	Obfw.	Ufer	4	1	Spitfire	Wirre Effroy	4:15 PM	124 Sqd	yes
3/13/42	Oblt.	Ebersberger	4 CO	18	Spitfire	Wimereux	4:18 PM	124 Sqd	yes
3/13/42	Fw.	Glunz	4	11	Spitfire	mid-Channel/ Dungeness	4:29 PM	401 Sqd	no
3/13/42	Lt.	Sternberg	5	5	Spitfire	mid-Channel	4:21 PM	401 Sqd	no
3/13/42	Oblt.	Borris	8 CO	10	Spitfire	unknown	4:09 PM	602 Sqd	yes

JG 26 Casualties: 12–13 March 1942

Date	Rank	Name	Cas	Unit	Aircraft	WNr	Mkgs	Place	Time	Cause
3/12/42	Fw.	Kalitzki, Willi	no	8	FW 190A-1	060		Ostend		engine
3/13/42	Uffz.	Grohmann, Otto	no	9	FW 190A-2	5213		Abbeville a/f		take-off

14 March

The German Navy was passing a west-bound convoy through the Channel. JG 26's escort patrols were uneventful, but the convoy was attacked off Le Havre by Coastal Command Hudsons. The ships were defended by JG 2 and the Einsatzstaffel of Jagdschule 5, flying from Octeville.

15 March

Oblt. Hanz Ragotzi transferred from the 8th Staffel to the Jabostaffel. This was now operational on Bf 109F-4/R1s, which carried one 551 lb bomb. Two or three missions a week were flown against military and industrial installations on the southern coast of England, usually in a strength of a single Rotte or Schwarm. Unlike the 1940 Jabo raids, these were flown on the deck, with a consequent improvement in effectiveness. The Messerschmitts depended on speed, surprise, and their extreme low altitude for survival; they normally flew their missions without escorts.

16 March

Lt. Roland Prym transferred into the Geschwader from JG 2 and was assigned to the 4th Staffel.

17 March

Oblt. Christian Eickhoff transferred from the Geschwader and joined JG 2. He was succeeded as 2nd Staffel Kapitän by a new arrival, Hptm. Fülbert Zink. Zink was a successful pilot with seventeen victories in his previous unit.

Oblt. Ernst Todt arrived from the Jagdgruppe Ost and was assigned to the 7th Staffel. Todt is the only pilot known to have joined the Geschwader from the new Ergänzungsgruppen in March.

23 March

A multi-Wing Rodeo to St. Omer brought a reaction from seven JG 26 patrols, probably being flown in Staffel strength. Several made contact, but claimed no victories.

24 March

Fighter Command ordered another two-part operation for Circus No. 116. Twelve Bostons attacked the Comines power station near Lille, followed a short time later by an attack on the Abbeville rail yards by six Bostons. Major Schöpfel led the First Gruppe in an attack on the Comines force, while the Second Gruppe handled the Abbeville raiders. The Third Gruppe was apparently kept on the ground. Schöpfel's formation concentrated on one squadron, No. 411, and shot down three Spitfires over a thirty-minute period. The close escort for the Abbeville force was provided by the No. 12 Group wing, which kept the Focke-Wulfs from the Bostons, but at a high price. No. 19 Squadron lost two Spitfires, as did No. 412, which was bounced by Hptm.

Müncheberg's Stabsschwarm. Müncheberg downed his first target, but his wingman, Lt. Georg Rosenblath, was shot down and killed, apparently by the Canadian squadron leader, who was then shot down by Müncheberg. Both Canadian pilots were taken to a German hospital, but the squadron leader died; the survivor was visited by Müncheberg. Uffz. Gerhard Vogt's FW 190 was claimed as a damaged by No. 412 Sqd.; Vogt was injured in the battle and force-landed at Abbeville.

The Tangmere Wing, flying top cover, saw only a few FW 190s. F/O Hugo Armstrong, an Australian pilot with No. 129 Squadron, dove on one just south of the Somme and shot it down from the rear with a three-second burst. His victim, Oblt. Otto Behrens, the 6th Staffel Kapitän, bailed out successfully but was injured when a high wind forced him into the ground while landing near Le Treport.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 24 March 1942

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
3/24/42	Maj.	Schöpfel	Ge CO	37	Spitfire	N France		411 Sqd	unk
3/24/42	Hptm.	Seifert	I CO	26	Spitfire	12km W of Boulogne	5:10 PM	411 Sqd	yes
3/24/42	Obfw.	Leibold	3	7	Spitfire	between Lille and Ypres	4:37 PM	411 Sqd	yes
3/24/42	Hptm.	Müncheberg	II CO	64	Spitfire	NW of Rue/Cambron	4:30 PM	412 Sqd	yes
3/24/42	Hptm.	Müncheberg	II CO	65	Spitfire	Cambron	4:35 PM	412 Sqd	yes
3/24/42	Gefr.	Birke	4	1	Spitfire	S of Hurt	4:40 PM	19 Sqd	yes
3/24/42	Obfw.	Gerhardt W.	5	9	Spitfire	Somme Estuary	4:38 PM	19 Sqd	yes



Uffz. Gerhard Vogt taxis his FW 190A-1 "brown 13" (W.Nr. 013) past the Abbeville hangars. On 24 March Vogt was injured, and his aircraft badly damaged, in combat with Spitfires. (*Petrick*)

JG 26 Casualties: 24 March 1942

Date	Rank	Name	Cas	Unit	Aircraft	WNr	Mkgs	Place	Time	Cause
3/24/42	Lt.	Rosenblath, Georg	KIA	4	FW 190A-1	011		Cambron	4:30 PM	Spitfire
3/24/42	Uffz.	Vogt, Gerhard	WIA	6	FW 190A-1	013	br 13	Abbeville		Spitfire
3/24/42	Oblt.	Behrens, Otto	WIA	6 CO	FW 190A-1	010	br 5	near Le Treport		Spitfire

25 March

A multi-Wing sweep of the Pas de Calais was undoubtedly designed to divert the attention of the Calais controllers while Circus No. 117 attacked the Le Trait shipyards on the lower Seine. The sweep was broken off when it was intercepted by the First Gruppe, which downed one Spitfire, and the Le Trait raid was handled by JG 2 fighters controlled from Le Havre. The Second and Third Gruppen were scrambled, but failed to make contact.

The Jabostaffel's Oblt. Ragotzi and Obfw. Busch were assigned a very unusual mission, escort for a long-range reconnaissance aircraft to Harwich at 26,000 feet. They were intercepted by two Hurricanes, and shot both down. These were the only claims for aerial victories ever filed by the Jabostaffel; they were not confirmed.

26 March

A Ramrod to attack shipping at Le Havre did not entice the Jafü controllers to release JG 26's patrols, which remained above the Pas de Calais while JG 2 defended Le Havre.

The 6th Staffel's Lt. Alois Löhr was killed in a flying accident. His Focke-Wulf's engine failed while at 2,500 feet on a test flight, and he dove into the ground near Abbeville.

27 March

A Fighter Command Ramrod to Ostend harbor was intercepted by the First and Third Gruppen. Hptm. Priller shot down one Spitfire six miles off shore. A First Gruppe Focke-Wulf made a hard forced landing near Ardres, injuring its pilot, while a Third Gruppe aircraft crash-landed on Coquelles with a badly damaged engine. The Second Gruppe's Alarmstart did not make contact with the RAF.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 25–27 March 1942

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
3/25/42	Obfw.	Leibold	3	8	Spitfire	Boulogne	6:10 PM	303 Sqd	yes
3/25/42	Obfw.	Busch E.	10(J)	8	Hurricane	E of Harwich			no
3/25/42	Oblt.	Ragotzi	10(J)	2	Hurricane	E of Harwich			no
3/27/42	Hptm.	Priller	III CO	60	Spitfire	10km W of Ostend	4:40 PM	313 Sqd	yes

JG 26 Casualties: 26–27 March 1942

Date	Rank	Name	Cas	Unit	Aircraft	WNr	Mkgs	Place	Time	Cause
3/26/42	Lt.	Löhr, Alois	KIFA	6	FW 190A-1	072		nr Abbeville/ Hautvillers		engine
3/27/42	Fw.	Willius, Karl	WIA	3	FW 190A-2	2083		nr Ardres		engine/ combat
3/27/42	Uffz.	Gruenlinger, Walter	no	III St	FW 190A-1	070		Coquelles a/f		engine/ combat

28 March

A late afternoon Rodeo prompted a much larger and more aggressive response than fighter sweeps normally received. The Stabsschwarm and First and Third Gruppen scrambled at about 1810. The Second Gruppe was held at Abbeville until 1832 hours, when a report was received that an attack on Boulogne was imminent; then it too left the ground. The Hornchurch Wing engaged the Stab

and the First Gruppe over Guines and back over the Channel and lost one Spitfire. Obfw. Erwin Leibold of the First Gruppe Stab was shot down over Marquise and injured; a Geschwaderstab Focke-Wulf made a belly-landing near Guines with engine damage.

The Kenley Wing arrived a few minutes later to sweep from Cap Gris Nez to Calais, and drew the attention of every airborne German formation. The 7th Staffel's Lt. Hans Johannsen was out-turned by his opponent and shot down, crashing near the Geschwader command post at Audembert. He was the only German loss. Pilots from the three JG 26 Gruppen shot down four Spitfires; one of these was piloted by Kenley's flying station commander, G/C Victor Beamish, who was killed.

JG 26 Casualties: 28 March 1942

Date	Rank	Name	Cas	Unit	Aircraft	WNr	Mkgs	Place	Time	Cause
3/28/42	Lt.	Johannsen, Hans	KIA	7	FW 190A-1	075		SW of Audembert a/f Marquise		Spitfire
3/28/42	Obfw.	Leibold, Erwin	WIA	I St	FW 190A-2	5205				Spitfire

29 March

A Fighter Command Rodeo was chased back over the Channel by the First Gruppe and lost one Spitfire to the 3rd Staffel's Fw. Emil Babenz.

Fw. Otto Görtz transferred from the 5th Staffel to the Jabostaffel.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 28–29 March 1942

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
3/28/42	Maj.	Schöpfel	Ge CO	38	Spitfire	unknown	6:30 PM	64 Sqd	yes
3/28/42	Lt.	Dippel	2	6	Spitfire	N of Wissant	6:45 PM	64 Sqd	yes
3/28/42	Fw.	Babenz	3	11	Spitfire	Cap Blanc Nez	6:58 PM	457+602 Sqd	yes
3/28/42	Oblt.	Galland W-F.	6	4	Spitfire	Cap Gris Nez	6:50 PM	457+602 Sqd	yes
3/28/42	Obfw.	Bierwirth	5	2	Spitfire	Cap Gris Nez	7:00 PM	457+602 Sqd	yes
3/28/42	Hptm.	Priller	III CO	61	Spitfire	Cap Gris Nez-Blanc Nez	6:50 PM	457+602 Sqd	yes
3/28/42	Lt.	Unzeitig	III St	10	Spitfire	Cap Gris Nez	6:55 PM	457+602 Sqd	yes
3/29/42	Fw.	Babenz	3	12	Spitfire	10km SE of Dungeness	5:05 PM	401 Sqd.	unk

31 March

Fighter Command lost thirty-two Spitfires and twenty-seven pilots on the month's offensive operations. JG 26 lost four pilots killed in combat; JG 2, which saw very little action during March, lost three. Churchill's "plane for plane" requirement was not being met, but Sholto Douglas and Leigh-Mallory saw no option but to continue the offensive much as before. Mission plans grew ever more complex, with the addition of more feints and diversions. The skill of the German controllers grew proportionately, and the tactical initiative remained firmly in the hands of the defenders.

A summary document supplied to Air Minister Archibald Sinclair by Fighter Command forms the basis for the following table. The original document contained only Fighter Command's claims and losses; the present author has added Luftflotte 3's fighter claims and losses, based on the latest research. JG 2's claims are known to be incomplete, and a few of JG 26's may still be missing.

RAF FIGHTER COMMAND OFFENSIVE OPERATIONS

Luftflotte 3 and RAF Fighter Claims and Losses: March 1942

DATE	RAF MISSION	LF3 LOSSES			RAF LOSSES		LF3 CLAIMS		
		RAF CLAIMS		ACTUAL (>60%)	(Fighter Cmd)		JG 2	JG 26	
		Dest	Prob		A/C	Pilots	(Conf)	(Conf)	(Unconf)
3 Mar 42	Feint Sweep	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
8 Mar 42	Circus 112	2	3	4	3	3	0	2	2
9 Mar 42	Circus 113	5	2	0	3	3	0	2	2
13 Mar 42	Circus 114	9	5	0	6	5	0	5	3
13 Mar 42	Roadstead	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	0
14 Mar 42	Roadstead	9	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
14 Mar 42	Ramrod	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
23 Mar 42	Sweep	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
24 Mar 42	Circus 116	2	1	2	7	7	0	7	0
25 Mar 42	Circus 117	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
25 Mar 42	Sweep	0	0	0	1	1	0	2	1
26 Mar 42	Ramrod 17	8	0	1	2	2	0	0	0
27 Mar 42	Ramrod 18	1	2	2	1	1	0	1	0
28 Mar 42	Rodeo	12	10	2	6	5	0	7	0
29 Mar 42	Rodeo	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
TOTALS		53	28	11	32	27	1	26	9

1 April

Routine patrols and Alarmstarts were flown. A large RAF force crossed the coast at 1400 and a report that it contained bombers prompted the entire Geschwader to scramble. Apparently only the First Gruppe made contact, and it claimed no victories.

2 April

Routine patrols and Alarmstarts were flown. At 1500 the Second and Third Gruppen were scrambled to intercept an RAF formation that had attacked shipping five miles west of Cap Gris Nez. Hptm. Priller and his Third Gruppe formation made contact with Spitfires, but scored no victories.

3 April

Routine patrols and Alarmstarts were flown in response to RAF formations flying over the Channel. No contact was reported.

4 April

Circus No. 119 sent twelve Bostons to the St. Omer rail yards, escorted or supported by fourteen Spitfire squadrons. The Jafü did not scramble the Geschwader until the British formation had crossed the coast at Boulogne and the presence of bombers had been confirmed visually. The First Gruppe, now fully equipped with FW 190s, took off from Arques at 1120, and after a maximum-speed climb was able to make an attack as the Bostons were leaving St. Omer. Seifert's men struck the top cover from behind and quickly downed two Spitfires. A few Focke-Wulfs made an unsuccessful run on the bombers and then climbed away to resume their slashing attacks on the escorts, which were from the Northolt Wing. Two more Polish Spitfires went down. The engine of Uffz. Erich Cubillus's FW 190 failed and he force-landed on St. Omer with light injuries.

The Second and Third Gruppen were vectored to Calais to intercept the withdrawing formation. The skies over the Continent were cloudless, and the

Focke-Wulfs' attack from out of the bright sun scattered the Spitfires. The Allied pilots had no place to hide, and seven went down in minutes – four from the Kenley Wing, two from Biggin Hill, and one from Hornchurch. The rest were saved by the Germans' recall, which was ordered at 1201. The three Gruppen claimed fourteen Spitfires in a span of eleven minutes; only Cubillus's Focke-Wulf sustained recordable damage.

Hptm. Priller's take-off had been delayed until 1145, and he missed the shooting party. When aircraft were reported in mid-Channel at 1400 he led his Gruppe Stabsschwarm up from Coquelles to investigate. The aircraft were No. 129 Sqd. Spitfires, escorting an ASR launch. Priller's attack hit two Spitfires. On its return flight one Spitfire dove suddenly into the sea, killing the pilot. The second was piloted by P/O Ted Hall, who recalls:

"Hugo Armstrong and I came through a layer of cloud at about 3,000 feet. As I levelled out just under clouds yellow tracer was streaking over my right wing; then holes appeared, and white smoke entered the cockpit. I yanked the stick back to re-enter the cloud. As I did so, no more than fifty feet away I saw the pilot, then the German black and white cross, turning sharply away and down. They were apparently waiting for us."

Hall's engine cut out, but he was able to glide back across the coast and crash-land at Ramsgate.

Forty-five minutes after landing from this mission Priller took off again to attack another ASR force. This time the escorts were from No. 602 Squadron, which beat off the Focke-Wulfs without loss.



The 2nd Staffel's Oblt. Karl-August Crull returns to Arques on 4 April in FW 190A-1 "black 8", W.Nr. 023. Lt. Georg Greffenius was killed in this aircraft on 29 June. (*Dietze via Meyer*)

JG 26 Victory Claims: 4 April 1942

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
4/4/42	Hptm.	Seifert	I CO	27	Spitfire	S of Gravelines	11:40 AM	317 Sqd	yes
4/4/42	Obfw.	Kirstein	2	1	Spitfire	N of St. Omer	11:35 AM	303 Sqd	yes
4/4/42	Lt.	Dippel	2	7	Spitfire	3km NNW of Cap Blanc Nez	11:42 AM	316 Sqd	yes
4/4/42	Fw.	Bohn	3	3	Spitfire	10km SW of St. Omer	11:35 AM	303 Sqd	yes
4/4/42	Hptm.	Müncheberg	II CO	66	Spitfire	W of Calais, in sea	11:46 AM		yes
4/4/42	Obfw.	Ufer	4	2	Spitfire	SE of Calais	11:43 AM		yes
4/4/42	Obfw.	Gerhardt W.	5	10	Spitfire	Calais	11:40 AM		yes
4/4/42	Oblt.	Kosse	5 CO	10	Spitfire	NNW of Calais	11:45 AM		yes
4/4/42	Uffz.	Vogt	6	3	Spitfire	Watten	11:40 AM		yes
4/4/42	Hptm.	Priller	III CO	62	Spitfire	Channel Narrows Calais-Dover	2:15 PM	129 Sqd	yes
4/4/42	Oblt.	Hermichen	7	12	Spitfire	unknown	11:35 AM		yes
4/4/42	Oblt.	Borris	8 CO	11	Spitfire	unknown	11:40 AM		yes
4/4/42	Obfw.	Heitmann	8	3	Spitfire	3km N of Calais	11:45 AM		yes
4/4/42	Oblt.	Borris	8 CO	12	Spitfire	3km N of Sangatte	11:46 AM		yes
4/4/42	Oblt.	Ruppert K.	9 CO	12	Spitfire	unknown	11:39 AM		yes

5 April

It was decided to move the Third Gruppe from its exposed location on the small coastal field at Coquelles to Wevelghem, a pre-war Belgian airfield with far superior facilities. Uffz. Georg Mondry wrecked his Focke-Wulf in a crash-landing at Gravelines when its engine failed on the transfer flight.

8 April

An early-morning Rodeo to St. Omer brought all three Gruppen up in defense. The Third Gruppe, now flying from Wevelghem, did not make contact. The 5th Staffel's Obfw. Werner Gerhardt was injured in combat over St. Omer, and another Second Gruppe Focke-Wulf crash-landed on Drucat with serious damage. No Fighter Command pilot filed a claim. One pilot from the First Gruppe and one from the Second claimed Spitfires over the Channel; one Spitfire was in fact lost.

10 April

Fighter Command dispatched three two-Wing Rodeos to the Pas de Calais to cover a Ramrod by twelve Hurribombers (bomb-carrying Hurricanes) against targets at Boulogne. The three Gruppen scrambled between 1717 and 1720. The two Spitfire wings flying in direct support of the bombers bore the brunt of the attack. The Tangmere Wing was flying high cover; the Northolt Wing, close escort. The Tangmere wing commander was leading No. 340 (Free French) Squadron on its first combat mission; the Squadron was in the leading and low position in the wing formation. The wing leader called out enemy aircraft below and threw his Spitfire into a quick split-S that only his section could follow. While in their dives the four Spitfires were attacked from the rear by a Schwarm of Focke-Wulfs and three Spitfires were shot down. Four were claimed. The victorious Second Gruppe pilots were four of the best: Hptm. Müncheberg; Oblt. Wutz Galland, today flying in the Gruppe Stabsschwarm; and Oblt. Ebersberger and Fw. Glunz from the 4th Staffel. The Northolt Wing attacked the Second Gruppe from below and shot down and killed Lt. Werner Michalski and Fw. Paul Rieger. By now more Focke-Wulfs had arrived, and the battle spread from Boulogne to Gravelines, where two No. 313 Sqd. Spitfires went down. These were probably the victims of the First and Third Gruppen.

The Jabostaffel lost a Bf 109 when Uffz. Karl-Heinz Gaykow force-landed on Arques owing to a problem with his aircraft. Gaykow was on a combat flight, but whether this was a Jagdbomber or a defensive mission is unknown.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 8–10 April 1942

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
4/8/42	Lt.	Uiberacker	G. 1	5	Spitfire	5km SE of Dover, in Channel	8:35 AM		unk
4/8/42	Obfw.	Bierwirth	5	3	Spitfire	8km N of Calais	8:15 AM	64 Sqd	yes
4/10/42	Fw.	Willius	3	14	Spitfire	NE of Calais	5:40 PM	313 Sqd	yes
4/10/42	Oblt.	Galland W-F.	II St	5	Spitfire	5km W of Etaples	5:45 PM	340 Sqd	yes
4/10/42	Hptm.	Müncheberg	II CO	67	Spitfire	NW of Etaples, in sea	5:50 PM	340 Sqd	yes
4/10/42	Oblt.	Ebersberger	4 CO	19	Spitfire	Le Touquet	5:42 PM	340 Sqd	yes
4/10/42	Fw.	Glunz	4	12	Spitfire	Etaples	5:43 PM	340 Sqd	yes
4/10/42	Lt.	Galland P.	8	5	Spitfire	unknown	5:43 PM	313 Sqd	yes

JG 26 Casualties: 2–10 April 1942

Date	Rank	Name	Cas	Unit	Aircraft	WNr	Mkgs	Place	Time	Cause
4/2/42	Lt.	Göcke, Elmar	WIA	9	FW 190A-1			20km S of Cap Gris Nez		Spitfire
4/4/42	Uffz.	Cubillus, Erich	WIFA	1	FW 190A-1	100		St Omer		engine
4/5/42	Fw.	Mondry, Georg	WIFA	7	FW 190A-1	084	wh 8	Gravelines		engine
4/8/42	Obfw.	Gerhardt, Werner	WIA	5	FW 190A-1	094	bk 8	St Omer		Spitfire
4/10/42	Lt.	Michalski, Werner	KIA	4	FW 190A-1	067	wh 5	Abbeville-Drucat a/f	5:45 PM	Spitfire
4/10/42	Fw.	Rieger, Paul	KIA	5	FW 190A-1	037	bk 2	Berck sur Mer	5:45 PM	Spitfire
4/10/42	Uffz.	Gaykow, Karl-Heinz	WIFA	10(J)	Bf 109F-4/R1	8353	wh 6+ bomb	Arques a/f		defect

12 April

The entire Geschwader was scrambled shortly before 1320 as an RAF formation crossed the coast between Calais and Dunkirk. This was Circus No. 122, whose nine Bostons were headed for the Hazebrouck rail yards. Contact was first made over Hazebrouck; combats continued as the formation crossed the coast at Boulogne and until the German fighters were recalled from mid-Channel at 1405. Over Boulogne the Stabsschwarm dove out of the sun through German flak and the RAF escort and peppered the Boston formation with cannon fire while the First Gruppe hit one of the close escort formations, the Tangmere Wing, from the rear. Four No. 41 Sqd. Spitfires went down; a fifth crash-landed in England. The other Tangmere squadron, No. 129, lost no aircraft, but three returned with serious damage, and a fourth did not lose his pursuers until he was back over Kent. Hptm. Gäth of the Geschwaderstab shot down a Boston; the four Focke-Wulfs of the Stabsschwarm were then chased by the entire Northolt Wing. The Schwarm got split up, and Lt. Heinz Luckhardt, Major Schöpfel's wingman, was shot down south of Wizernes; he did not get out of his aircraft.

The Second and Third Gruppen claimed nine Spitfires from the various cover wings. Hptm. Priller had just shot down two Spitfires over Gravelines when his wingman, Lt. Robert Unzeitig, radioed that he would have to force-land. His Focke-Wulf dove away streaming smoke. Part of its tail broke off, and the aircraft went into a spin. Unzeitig managed to get out of the plane, but his parachute did not open. Unzeitig had claimed ten victories in 110 combat missions since leaving the Ergänzungsstaffel in March 1941; Priller had lost a good friend and a very reliable wingman.

A lone JG 26 pilot made an indelible impression on the American pilots of No. 71 (Eagle) Squadron. Oblt. Mietusch dove behind the Spitfire formation, zoomed up and fired a short burst at the rear aircraft in a flight of four – the Squadron's flights were still flying in trail – half-rolled, and dove away. The Spitfire, its pilot probably dead, entered a steep dive and crashed. None of the other American pilots had a chance to react.

Shortly after today's Circus the Tangmere Wing abandoned the line astern formation. Its squadrons began flying in three flights of four abreast, similar to the standard Jagdwaffe Staffel formation. Ted Hall recalls:

“The German tactics were always good. Our inexperience showed. They were able to get above the RAF on most occasions and used the sun to hide before attacking and made good use of clouds. In line astern the last pilot of each flight had a very short life, in many cases. In the new formation losses dropped immediately. Our squadrons could now turn much quicker to face the diving Germans, and were not taken by surprise as often, as pilots on one side of the formation could watch behind the other side. No stiff necks from trying to see behind you, as was the usual case in line astern flying.”

JG 26 Victory Claims: 12 April 1942

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
4/12/42	Hptm.	Gäth	Ge St	5	Boston	unknown	1:57 PM	107 Sqd	yes
4/12/42	Hptm.	Seifert	I St	28	Spitfire	Boulogne-St. Omer	1:35 PM	41 Sqd	yes
4/12/42	Oblt.	Haiböck	1 CO	10	Spitfire	10km E of Dover	1:50 PM	41 Sqd	unk
4/12/42	Fw.	Bohn	3	4	Spitfire	5km NE of St. Omer	1:40 PM	41 Sqd	yes
4/12/42	Fw.	Willius	3	15	Spitfire	2-3km S of Bourbourg	1:45 PM	41 Sqd	yes
4/12/42	Oblt.	Kosse	5 CO	11	Spitfire	Calais	1:42 PM	316 Sqd	yes
4/12/42	Lt.	Sternberg	5	6	Spitfire	St. Mariakerke	1:45 PM		yes
4/12/42	Hptm.	Priller	III CO		Spitfire	Boulogne			no
4/12/42	Hptm.	Priller	III CO	63	Spitfire	N of Gravelines	1:45 PM	41 Sqd	yes
4/12/42	Oblt.	Mietusch	7 CO	15	Spitfire	SE St Omer/ E of Arques	1:34 PM	71 Sqd	yes
4/12/42	Fw.	Ehlen	7	7	Spitfire	E of Arques	1:36 PM	41 Sqd	yes
4/12/42	Oblt.	Hermichen	7	13	Spitfire	3kn N of Cassel	1:40 PM	313 Sqd	yes
4/12/42	Oblt.	Mietusch	7 CO	16	Spitfire	12km WNW of Dunkirk	1:49 PM		yes
4/12/42	Oblt.	Ruppert K.	9 CO	13	Spitfire	unknown	2:46 PM		yes

13 April

In mid-afternoon the Kenley and Digby Wings flew a Rodeo from Le Touquet to Cap Gris Nez. Although the three Gruppen scrambled, the Spitfires did not cross the coast, and few pilots from either side sighted any enemy aircraft. Flying at 30,000 feet, the leader of No. 602 Squadron, the famous Irish pilot Paddy Finucane, did see some FW 190s 7,000 feet below him. Finucane led his squadron in a diving attack, and only then saw contrails from other German fighters high above the Spitfires. Several of the contrails suddenly stopped, meaning that some of the FW 190s had dived. Finucane's men made a quick pass through the lower formation and shot down the 1st Staffel's Uffz. Erich Cubillus, who died attempting a crash-landing on Marquise. Finucane then ordered his pilots into a defensive circle. The Spitfires banked tightly on one wing, turning into each attack and taking snap shots at the First Gruppe Focke-Wulfs as they dove past. The Spitfires broke away for England in pairs when

ordered by Finucane. Although some of them were chased to Dover, all returned, and none sustained recordable damage.

14 April

In the afternoon and evening seven Fighter Command wings swept around the Pas de Calais. German fighters were not ordered to attack until twenty-five bombers were reported over land, flying toward Cap Gris Nez. There were no bombers, but all airborne JG 26 units headed for Cap Gris Nez, and there were engagements with at least four of the Spitfire wings. Major Schöpfel and his new wingman, Lt. Hegenauer, each claimed a Spitfire, as did Fw. Glunz. The Second Gruppe, however, lost two pilots, Uffz. Willy Schöbel and Uffz. Hermann Schwardt, to Spitfires.

15 April

This was an exceptionally active day for Fighter Command. No. 10 Group conducted its first Circus, a raid on the Cherbourg docks, and lost three Spitfires to JG 2. JG 26 was scrambled several times, against feint Rodeos by the Kenley and Biggin Hill Wings and against two Hurribomber Circuses, one escorted by eighteen squadrons of Spitfires and the other, fourteen. Most of the engagements were inconclusive; however, the North Weald Wing fought with elements of both the First and Third Gruppen between St. Omer and Calais and shot down two First Gruppe FW 190s for the loss of one Spitfire and pilot. The German pilots, Oblt. Karl-August Crull and Gefr. Alfred Eichelmann, were killed.

Benito Mussolini presented Hptm. Müncheberg with the highest Italian



Oblt. Crull examines the damage to his aircraft after a mission from Arques in early April. Crull was killed on 15 April in combat with No. 121 Sqd. Spitfires. (*Dietze via Meyer*)

decoration, the Gold Medal for Bravery, for his 1941 service in the Mediterranean theater. Müncheberg was the first of only two Germans to win this award; the other was the noted fighter pilot Hans-Joachim Marseille.

JG 26 Casualties: 12–15 April 1942

Date	Rank	Name	Cas	Unit	Aircraft	WNr	Mkgs	Place	Time	Cause
4/12/42	Lt.	Luckhardt, Heinz	KIA	Ge St	FW 190A-2	5217		Calais-Wizernes	1:35 PM	Spitfire
4/12/42	Lt.	Unzeitig, Robert	KIA	III St	FW 190A-2	214	<+1	Gravelines	1:45 PM	Spitfire
4/13/42	Uffz.	Cubillus, Erich	KIA	1	FW 190A-2	5229		near Marquise		Spitfire
4/14/42	Uffz.	Schöbel, Willy	KIA	4	FW 190A-1	009	wh 16	near Hardinghem	6:45 PM	Spitfire
4/14/42	Uffz.	Schwardt, Hermann	KIA	6	FW 190A-1	030	br 2	St Omer/Pihen	6:45 PM	Spitfire
4/15/42	Gefr.	Eickelmann, Alfred	KIA	1	FW 190A-2	5233	wh 7	Cap Gris Nez		Spitfire
4/15/42	Oblt.	Crull, Karl-August	KIA	2	FW 190A-2	2063		Moringhem-St. Omer		Spitfire

16 April

Fighter Command sent a Ramrod to the Le Havre power station, two Rodeos to the Calais coast, and a Hurribomber-baited Circus to Dunkirk. The Le Havre bombing raid was defended by JG 2, which lost three Bf 109s and two pilots. JG 26 left the aircraft flying along the Calais coastline alone until it was released from its patrol zones to attack the late Rodeo as it withdrew. Hptm Priller claimed one Spitfire off Calais; a III/JG 2 pilot claimed another. Both Spitfires reached England and crash-landed.

Two pilots joined the Geschwader from the Ergänzungsjagdgruppe West: Fw. Fritz Kessler was assigned to the 7th Staffel, and Oblt. Werner Kassa joined the 10th Staffel, the Jabostaffel.

17 April

Fighter Command’s principal task on this date was to divert and extend JG 2 in support of a daring daylight raid on Augsburg by twelve Bomber Command Lancasters, whose flight path led them near Paris. A Ramrod was flown to Cherbourg, and a Circus to Rouen, both important targets in JG 2’s zone of operations. JG 2 defended against both these raids, and also shot down four Lancasters.

Only a single Rodeo was directed at the Pas de Calais. Pilots from the Second and Third Gruppen claimed single Spitfires; one Spitfire from No. 121 (Eagle) Squadron failed to return from the sweep.

Two pilots joined the Geschwader from the Ergänzungsjagdgruppe West: Uffz. Heinrich Klems was assigned to the Stab of the First Gruppe; Fw. Walter Holl was assigned to the 9th Staffel.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 14–17 April 1942

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
4/14/42	Maj.	Schöpfel	Ge CO	39	Spitfire	unknown	6:33 PM	403 Sqd	yes
4/14/42	Lt.	Hegenauer	Ge St	2	Spitfire	unknown	6:35 PM	403 Sqd	yes
4/14/42	Fw.	Glunz	4	13	Spitfire	Calais	6:50 PM	317 Sqd	yes
4/15/42	Oblt.	Borris	8 CO	13	Spitfire	E of Cap Gris Nez	7:04 PM	222 Sqd	yes
4/16/42	Hptm.	Priller	III CO	64	Spitfire	5km N of Calais	6:26 PM	118+129 Sqd	yes
4/17/42	Obfw.	Meyer W.	6	13	Spitfire	Calais	4:15 PM	121 Sqd	yes
4/17/42	Oblt.	Borris	8 CO	14	Spitfire	unknown	4:14 PM	121 Sqd	yes

18–19 April

Routine patrols failed to make contact with RAF aircraft flying along the coast of the Pas de Calais.

23 April

Routine patrols failed to make contact with the RAF. Lt. Eugen Kotiza transferred from the 3rd Staffel to JG 1.

24 April

Circus No. 132 was planned around a bombing raid by twelve Bostons on oil installations at Vlissingen, on Walcheren Island in The Netherlands. Sweeps were carried out along the coast of the Pas de Calais to divert JG 26. The Jafü readily distinguished four separate RAF formations and passed control to the three Gruppen, since three of the British forces were heading for their individual areas of operation. The main force, containing the Bostons and close escort, was too far out to sea for a convenient interception, and was ignored.

Müncheberg's Second Gruppe scrambled from Abbeville at 1422 and headed for Berck sur Mer, where it was in position to intercept the rear support wing, which was sweeping the coast to the west of Cap Gris Nez. The Focke-Wulfs made one quick diving attack, and four No. 234 Sqd. Spitfires went down.

The Third Gruppe took off from Wevelghem at 1428 and flew to the coast at Ostend. Their targets were the three Spitfire wings of Fighter Command's forward support force "A". Only the Hornchurch Wing proceeded inland as far as briefed, and it bore the brunt of the attack by Priller's men. One No. 313 Sqd. Spitfire was badly damaged, but made it back to England, where it spun in, killing the pilot. The wing fought its way back out to sea, where two No. 122 Sqd. Spitfires were shot down. The Kenley Wing witnessed this combat but left the Hornchurch pilots on their own; by this time most Fighter Command pilots were determined to fly their missions as ordered, but not to go out of their way to look for trouble.

Seifert's First Gruppe left Arques at about 1430 and climbed while flying to Calais, paralleling the path of forward support force "B", part of which had reached St. Omer before turning back. When in position above and to the west of the Biggin Hill Wing, the Focke-Wulfs attacked and shot down three Spitfires; one of these was also claimed by a Cap Gris Nez flak battery.

The Gruppe controllers began issuing their landing orders at 1516. The Geschwader had shot down ten Spitfires – nine were claimed – and had suffered no losses. The withdrawing RAF pilots were warned of four Bf 109s off Dungeness. These were from the JG 26 Jabostaffel, returning after a successful attack on a gasoline storage tank at Folkestone. Fw. Hans-Jürgen Fröhlich's Messerschmitt was hit by anti-aircraft fire during the attack and crashed in the Channel during the return flight. Fröhlich was a pre-war member of the Geschwader with five air victories and ten Jabo raids to his credit, gained in sixty-five missions; his body washed up on a Dutch beach in late July. Light anti-aircraft fire would remain the most effective weapon against the low-level raiders for some time. The spring of 1942 found Fighter Command no closer than in 1940 to finding a defense against the Jabo raids; Spitfire Vs were unable to catch the Messerschmitts at low altitude once the latter had dropped their bombs.

Circus No. 133, a relatively simple attack on the Abbeville motor yards by six Bostons, gave the Kenley Wing a chance to atone for its failure earlier in

the afternoon. This Circus is called a Rodeo in some documents, and the Bostons may in fact not have flown the mission. In any event, the Second Gruppe was scrambled late, and the New Zealanders of No. 485 Squadron were able to attack the Gruppe Stabsschwarm while the latter was still in its climb. Lt. Ortwin Petersen was hit and died in his airplane; Obfw. Wilhelm Mackenstedt crash-landed near Abbeville with severe head injuries. The Kenley Wing sustained no losses on the mission. Petersen's fighter was the first FW 190A-3 to be lost by the Geschwader. This variant had a new BMW 801D-2 engine with greater power and greater reliability than its predecessor. Cooling louvers cut into the cowling finally solved the Focke-Wulf fighter's overheating problem. The FW 190A-3 had a limited production run and did not fully supplant the Geschwader's FW 190A-2s before it was in turn succeeded by the FW 190A-4 in late summer.

The Geschwader suffered another fatality when Uffz. Georg Pistor crashed near Courtrai while testing his Focke-Wulf. Pistor had flown fourteen combat missions as Oblt. Mietusch's wingman since joining the 7th Staffel the previous September.

The 8th Staffel's Obfw. Max Martin had flown only one combat mission – during the maximum-strength Operation Donnerkeil – since being injured the previous September. He had spent the past several weeks piloting courier flights in the Third Gruppe's Kf 35 and Bf 108. It was decided to remove him from combat status permanently, and he left for instructor duty at Herzogenaurath.



The 2nd Staffel's "black 9", Uffz. Heinz-Günther Adam's usual aircraft – Arques, April. (*Dietze via Meyer*)

JG 26 Victory Claims: 24 April 1942

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
4/24/42	Hptm.	Seifert	1 CO	29	Spitfire	near Calais	3:02 PM	72 Sqd	yes
4/24/42	Fw.	Willius	3	16	Spitfire	near Calais	3:02 PM	72+124 Sqd	yes

4/24/42	Fw.	Bohn	3	5	Spitfire	near Calais	3:04 PM	72+124 Sqd	yes
4/24/42	Obfw.	Hoffmann H.	4	6	Spitfire	Berck sur Mer	2:45 PM	234 Sqd	yes
4/24/42	Oblt.	Ebersberger	4 CO	20	Spitfire	Le Touquet	2:46 PM	234 Sqd	yes
4/24/42	Oblt.	Ebersberger	4 CO	21	Spitfire	Le Touquet	2:53 PM	234 Sqd	yes
4/24/42	Oblt.	Galland W-F.	6	6	Spitfire	Cap d'Albert	2:54 PM	234 Sqd	yes
4/24/42	Oblt.	Borris	8 CO	15	Spitfire	75km WNW of Ostend	2:50 PM	122 Sqd	yes
4/24/42	Lt.	Galland P.	8	6	Spitfire	NW of Ostend	2:51 PM	122 Sqd	yes

JG 26 Casualties: 24 April 1942

Date	Rank	Name	Cas	Unit	Aircraft	WNr	Mkgs	Place	Time	Cause
4/24/42	Fw.	Fröhlich, Hans-Jürgen	KIA	10(J)	Bf 109F-4/R1	7196		Folkestone		flak
4/24/42	Lt.	Petersen, Ortwin	KIA	6	FW 190A-3	5325	br 2	Berck sur Mer/ Le Biez		Spitfire
4/24/42	Uffz.	Pistor, Georg	KIFA	7	FW 190A-1	080	wh 9	Calais-Marck	4:45 PM	crashed
4/24/42	Obfw.	Mackenstedt, Wilhelm	WIA	6	FW 190A-3	254	br 4	Abbeville		Spitfire

25 April

This was a very busy day for Fighter Command and the two Kanalgeschwader. One Circus and two Ramrods were flown to targets in the Pas de Calais, while two Circuses, one Ramrod, and one Rodeo attacked targets in JG 2's zone of operations to the west. An early-morning Ramrod to the Dunkirk docks cost the RAF one Boston that was seen to come under attack by two FW 190s, and a Spitfire that ditched in the Channel; no matching German claims have been located. The escorting Spitfires claimed five FW 190s; one may have been piloted by the 3rd Staffel's Fw. Kurt Bohn, who was killed by a Spitfire north of Dunkirk at an unstated time.



Hptm. Müncheberg looks over Oblt. Wutz Galland's Focke-Wulf after combat on the afternoon of 25 April. This level of damage would not have been reported to Berlin; a rudder could be changed easily out on the Gruppe flight line. (*Van Boxem via Vanoverbeke*)

Circus No. 137, an attack on the Abbeville by six Bostons, brought up five German formations in defense, including the Stab and First Gruppe of JG 2, flying today from the old III/JG 26 base at Ligescourt, north of Abbeville. The three JG 26 Gruppen all scrambled a little after 1600 and flew west, climbing at their best speeds until they had reached about 30,000 feet. They struck the Spitfire formations just inland of the western coast of the Pas de Calais, and the fighting continued over the Channel, where JG 2 joined the battle. In fourteen minutes, ten Spitfires fell between the Somme Estuary and Boulogne. The action was so compressed in time and space that specific combat identifications cannot be made; the Spitfires were from six squadrons in four wings. The commander of the Digby Wing was wounded, and crash-landed in

England. The prospective chief medical officer of Fighter Command, a group captain, had insisted on joining Kenley Wing for the show and was shot down and killed. JG 26 claimed eight Spitfires and one Tomahawk; JG 2, two Spitfires. One JG 2 pilot failed to return; the collision of a German fighter with a No. 403 Sqd. Spitfire was witnessed by the Canadian pilots. Two First Gruppe Focke-Wulfs sustained damage during the day, but the times are unstated in the records; the Geschwader suffered no personnel losses in its defense against Circus No. 137.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 25 April 1942

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
4/25/42	Hptm.	Seifert	I CO	30	Spitfire	10km W of Berck sur Mer	4:40 PM		yes
4/25/42	Oblt.	Schmidt J.	3 CO	4	Tomahawk	5km W of Le Touquet	4:40 PM		yes
4/25/42	Hptm.	Müncheberg	II CO	68	Spitfire	SW of Crécy	4:40 PM		yes
4/25/42	Hptm.	Müncheberg	II CO	69	Spitfire	SW of Rue	4:43 PM		yes
4/25/42	Fw.	Glunz	4	14	Spitfire	Abbeville	4:43 PM		yes
4/25/42	Hptm.	Priller	III CO	65	Spitfire	10km W of St Etienne	4:54 PM		yes
4/25/42	Lt.	Galland P.	8	7	Spitfire	unknown	4:40 PM		yes
4/25/42	Oblt.	Ruppert K.	9 CO	14	Spitfire	unknown	4:37 PM		yes
4/25/42	Uffz.	Grünlinger	9	1	Spitfire	unknown	4:50 PM		yes

26 April

It was a day of Sitzbereitschaft (cockpit readiness) and Alarmstarts for the pilots of the Geschwader, as they reacted to one Circus, one Ramrod, and at least two Rodeos. In the most effective interception of the day, Müncheberg’s Second Gruppe, now known widely within Fighter Command as the “Abbeville Boys”, struck No. 485 Squadron (RNZAF), the high squadron of the Kenley Wing on a Rodeo to St. Omer, and shot down three Spitfires while badly damaging another. A No. 306 Squadron Spitfire from No. 10 Group was lost east of Calais at about the same time, probably the victim of the 8th Staffel’s Lt. Paul Galland. The First Gruppe claimed a Spitfire and a Tomahawk. The Geschwader sustained no losses or damage.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 26 April 1942

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
4/26/42	Lt.	Aistleitner	1	6	Spitfire	10-15km NW of Cap Gris Nez	2:35 PM	411 Sqd	yes
4/26/42	Oblt.	Schmidt J.	3 CO	5	Tomahawk	5km N of Cap Blanc Nez	5:55 PM		yes
4/26/42	Hptm.	Müncheberg	II CO	70	Spitfire	WNW of Calais, in sea	6:05 PM	485 Sqd	unk
4/26/42	Hptm.	Müncheberg	II CO	71	Spitfire	10km W of Cap Gris Nez	6:06 PM	485 Sqd	yes
4/26/42	Lt.	Galland P.	8	8	Spitfire	SE of Calais	5:57 PM	306 Sqd	yes

27 April

With the days lengthening, the Geschwader began defensive patrolling at 0700. The first major raid brought the three Gruppen into the air at 1118. This RAF force was Circus No. 142, a raid on St. Omer-Wizernes by seven Hurribombers escorted by two Spitfire wings and supported by a Rodeo of three more wings. The Rodeo did not make contact. The bombers and close escort wing came

under attack by the First Gruppe just off the target, but reached the Channel without loss. One Hurricane then hit the water in a low-altitude maneuver and crashed. No. 71 (Eagle) Squadron of Debden Wing, flying escort cover, dove after the FW 190s attacking the Hurricanes and was followed in the dive by the First Gruppe high cover, which shot down one Spitfire. The Eagles claimed 5-1-3 FW 190s, but none was lost or damaged. Hptm. Priller's Third Gruppe attacked the other two Debden squadrons, and a general dogfight developed in which four Spitfires went down, without loss to the Germans.

At 1410 an RAF force was detected south of Margate, and the Geschwader was scrambled again. This raid was Circus No. 143, an attack on Ostend by six Bostons escorted and supported by eleven Spitfire squadrons. One Boston was lost to the Ostend flak. Of the aerial defenders, only the Second Gruppe made contact. The Digby Wing, flying escort cover, lost one of its high cover Spitfires to an unidentified Focke-Wulf just after the target. Ten miles off Dunkirk Hptm. Müncheberg and Oblt. Ebersberger shot down two Tangmere Wing Spitfires, one piloted by the wing commander, who was rescued. The aircraft of the 6th Staffel's Uffz. Wilhelm Mayer was hit in the cockpit, and he made a smooth belly-landing back on Abbeville-Drucat.

Another large formation was detected off Deal at 1521. The Stabsschwarm and the First Gruppe were scrambled in good time, but the Second and Third Gruppen got off late, and in low strength. The RAF force was Circus No. 141, a raid on the Lille power station by twelve Bostons, escorted and supported by fifteen Spitfire squadrons. The bombers apparently made their approach at low speed, allowing the First Gruppe to attack them before the target was reached. The Bostons missed their target by five miles, and Hptm. Seifert then shot one of them down. Hptm. Gäth of the Geschwader Stab shot down a Spitfire of the Kenley Wing, the close escort; First Gruppe pilots downed two more. Hptm. Müncheberg caught the formation after it crossed the coast and shot down a Northolt Wing Spitfire flying escort cover. Two Spitfires of the Biggin Hill Wing, the high cover, failed to return, but no Luftwaffe claims for them have been located; they were possibly lost to flak or collision.

A report at 1840 of seventy aircraft over Ramsgate brought pilots of the First and Third Gruppen back into the air. This RAF force was a two-Wing Rodeo to St. Omer. Contact was made, but the only losses to either side were two No. 403 Squadron Spitfires that collided north of St. Omer and were probably credited to the 1st Staffel's Oblt. Haiböck, although the times of his claims would have to be in error for this identification to be valid.

The Geschwader's only casualty for the day was the 9th Staffel's Uffz. Herbert Contzen, whose engine started smoking after he had taken off on his first combat sortie. He was ordered to return to Arques immediately, but didn't; he lost control of his fighter and it struck the ground, killing him.

The Schlageter Geschwader was fully extended on this day. A number of pilots – for example, Hptm. Priller and Fw. Glunz – made four Alarmstarts. Victory claims totalled fourteen, for no combat losses. Fighter Command and No. 2 Group lost sixteen Spitfires, one Hurricane, and two Bostons.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 27 April 1942

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
4/27/42	Hptm.	Gäth	Ge St	6	Spitfire	near Wylder	3:50 PM	457+485 Sqd	yes
4/27/42	Hptm.	Seifert	I CO	31	Boston	near Bourbourg	3:50 PM	107 Sqd	yes

4/27/42	Oblt.	Haiböck	1 CO	11	Spitfire	N of St. Omer	12:14 PM	403 Sqd	yes
4/27/42	Oblt.	Haiböck	1 CO	12	Spitfire	N of St. Omer	12:14 PM	403 Sqd	yes
4/27/42	Oblt.	Zink	2 CO	18	Spitfire	near Watten	12:20 PM	71 Sqd	yes
4/27/42	Lt.	Rahardt	2	1	Spitfire	near Steenvoorde	3:55 PM	485 Sqd	yes
4/27/42	Fw.	Willius	3	17	Spitfire	15km NW of Dunkirk	4:02 PM	457+485 Sqd	unk
4/27/42	Hptm.	Müncheberg	II CO	72	Spitfire	NE of Dunkirk	2:47 PM	Tangmere+ 340 Sqd	yes
4/27/42	Hptm.	Müncheberg	II CO	73	Spitfire	N of Mardyck	4:06 PM	303 Sqd	yes
4/27/42	Oblt.	Ebersberger	4 CO	22	Spitfire	30km NW of Calais	2:46 PM	Tangmere+ 340 Sqd	unk
4/27/42	Hptm.	Priller	III CO	66	Spitfire	S of Ardres	12:25 PM	65 Sqd	yes
4/27/42	Hptm.	Priller	III CO	67	Spitfire	15km NW of Gravelines	12:30 PM	65 Sqd	unk
4/27/42	Obfw.	Kühdorf	7	3	Spitfire	3km NW of Calais	12:20 PM	111 Sqd	no
4/27/42	Oblt.	Naumann	9	7	Spitfire	4km N of Calais	12:30 PM	65 Sqd	yes



The 4th Staffel's Oblt. Kurt Ebersberger reports to Hptm. Müncheberg and Major Schöpfel – Abbeville, Spring 1942. (E.C.P.A.)

28 April

Fighter Command dispatched Circus No. 144 to the St. Omer railroad station; its six Bostons were escorted and supported by sixteen Spitfire squadrons in six wings. The First and Third Gruppen were scrambled at 1108, two minutes before three RAF formations were reported leaving Dover and Folkestone. There was a continuous cloud layer at 20,000 feet, forcing the RAF high cover to drop below it. Most of the German attacks came from out of this cloud. No. 121 (Eagle) Squadron, flying top cover for the North Weald Wing on forward support, was attacked by thirty Focke-Wulfs north of St. Omer, and two Spitfires were shot down. A Spitfire from the Northolt Wing was also downed at about this time. The victors were from the First and Third Gruppen and from 1/JG 2, which had flown over from Le Havre in its new FW 190s and claimed one Spitfire off Gravelines. As the Biggin Hill Wing approached Calais to furnish rear support it was attacked by the Third Gruppe, whose Hptm. Priller

and Oblt. Borris shot down fighters of No. 401 Squadron. Fighter Command losses totalled six Spitfires and pilots; Luftflotte 3 lost no pilots, and its aircraft sustained no reportable combat damage.

JG 2 was now converting rapidly to Focke-Wulf fighters. By the end of the month, I/JG 2 at Le Havre, II/JG 2 at Maupertus, and III/JG 2 at Beaumont le Roger were all flying combat missions in FW 190A-2s and FW 190A-3s.

29 April

In mid-afternoon Fighter Command sent the six Bostons of Circus No. 145 to bomb Dunkirk in what was described in F/L Hugo Armstrong’s logbook as a “pansy show for the King”, who was inspecting Biggin Hill. The Second and Third Gruppen were scrambled at 1534. The Third Gruppe’s Hptm. Priller reported intercepting “150 Spitfires” in the Le Touquet-Dunkirk area, but his Gruppe did not score. The Second Gruppe attacked the Northolt Wing over Le Treport. Its Stabsschwarm and one 4th Staffel Schwarm dove through the top cover squadron and opened fire on the lead Spitfires in two flights of No. 317 Squadron, which was leading the wing formation. With two short bursts of cannon fire Hptm. Müncheberg and Obfw. Hoffmann killed the Northolt wing commander and No. 317’s squadron leader.

While flying near Watten on their return from the mission the 7th Staffel’s Fw. Karl-Heinz Ehlen collided with his wingman, Fw. Fritz Kessler; both were killed. Kessler was on his first combat mission. Ehlen was one of the last Mediterranean veterans in the Staffel, and had claimed seven victories in 160 combat missions. Both pilots were given posthumous commissions.

Gefr. Horst Gauss joined the 1st Staffel from the Ergänzungsjagdgruppe West.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 28–29 April 1942

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
4/28/42	Hptm.	Seifert	I CO	32	Spitfire	3km W of Gravelines	11:35 AM	121+222	yes
4/28/42	Hptm.	Priller	III CO	68	Spitfire	Dunkirk-Gravelines	12:00 PM	+317 Sqd	
4/28/42	Oblt.	Borris	8 CO	16	Spitfire	S of Gravelines	11:34 AM	401 Sqd	yes
4/28/42	Oblt.	Borris	8 CO	17	Spitfire	unknown	11:59 AM	121+222	unk
4/29/42	Hptm.	Müncheberg	II CO	74	Spitfire	Le Touquet	4:04 PM	+317 Sqd	
4/29/42	Obfw.	Hoffmann	H. 4	7	Spitfire	Le Touquet	4:08 PM	401 Sqd	yes
								Northolt	yes
								Wing+	
								317 Sqd	
								Northolt	yes
								Wing+	
								317 Sqd	

30 April

Fighter Command flew 730 sorties on two Rodeos, a Circus, a Ramrod, and a Roadstead. Most of the RAF’s missions were to the west, but JG 26 pilots were scrambled several times during the day. A morning Rodeo to the coast at Calais caught the Geschwader Stabsschwarm in a poor tactical position between two formations of Spitfires. One British fighter fired on Oblt. Wilfried Sieling’s Focke-Wulf from long range and hit the pilot with a single machine-gun round. Sieling dove vertically and crashed to earth south of Gravelines. A damaged Third Gruppe Focke-Wulf force-landed on Coxyde; the Spitfires sustained no losses.

Circus No. 148, a late-evening raid on Abbeville, was engaged in strength by the Geschwader. All three Gruppen attacked the force as it withdrew south of the Somme Estuary. Seven Spitfires crash-landed on the coast or fell into the Channel. JG 26 sustained no losses or damage during this interception. JG 2 lost one pilot and two Bf 109Fs during the day.

Hptm. Werner Patz succeeded Oblt. Sieling as Geschwader adjutant.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 30 April 1942

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
4/30/42	Oblt.	Zink	2 CO	19	Spitfire	8km W of Somme Estuary	7:40 PM	129+340 Sqd	yes
4/30/42	Oblt.	Schmidt J.	3 CO	6	Spitfire	S of Somme Estuary	7:36 PM	129+340 Sqd	yes
4/30/42	Fw.	Babenz	3	13	Spitfire	2km W of Somme Estuary	7:38 PM	129+340 Sqd	yes
4/30/42	Hptm.	Müncheberg	II CO	75	Spitfire	W of Somme Estuary	7:36 PM	222 Sqd	yes
4/30/42	Obfw.	Ufer	4	3	Spitfire	St. Valéry	7:37 PM	222 Sqd	yes
4/30/42	Lt.	Sternberg	5	7	Spitfire	15km NW of Somme Estuary	7:42 PM	222 Sqd	unk
4/30/42	Fw.	Kruska	6	1	Spitfire	Le Treport	7:30 PM	222 Sqd	yes
4/30/42	Oblt.	Mietusch	7 CO		Spitfire	3km W of Somme Estuary	7:30 PM		no

JG 26 Casualties: 25–30 April 1942

Date	Rank	Name	Cas	Unit	Aircraft	WNr	Mkgs	Place	Time	Cause
4/25/42	Fw.	Bohn, Kurt	KIA	3	FW 190A-2	5231	yl 5	N of Dunkirk		Spitfire
4/27/42	Uffz.	Contzen, Herbert	KIFA	9	FW 190A-1	086	yl 10	3km W of Bergues		crashed
4/29/42	Lt.	Kessler, Fritz	KIFA	7	FW 190A-1	074	wh 3	Wulverdinghe	4:00 PM	collision
4/29/42	Lt.	Ehlen, Karl-Heinz	KIFA	7	FW 190A-2	5215	wh 10	SW of Merkeghem	4:00 PM	collision
4/30/42	Oblt.	Sieling, Wilfried	KIA	Ge St	FW 190A-2	202	bk He-	S of Gravelines	10:25 AM	Spitfire

British fighter losses increased in April to 107. RAF pilot losses totalled ninety-five, and included one group captain and two wing leaders. German losses remained low. Thirteen JG 26 pilots lost their lives in April’s combats; another four were killed in accidents.

The Fighter Command claim and loss summary prepared by Air Marshal Sholto Douglas for Air Minister Sinclair is continued below. Some of Sholto Douglas’s mission designations differ from those in the text, which were taken from No. 11 Group’s daily reports of operations. The present author has added Luftflotte 3’s fighter claims and losses. JG 2’s claims are definitely, and JG 26’s possibly, incomplete.

RAF FIGHTER COMMAND OFFENSIVE OPERATIONS

Luftflotte 3 and RAF Fighter Claims and Losses: April 1942

DATE	RAF MISSION	LF3 LOSSES			RAF LOSSES		LF3 CLAIMS		
		RAF CLAIMS			(Fighter Cmd)		JG 2	JG 26	
		Dest	Prob	(>60%)	A/C	Pilots	(Conf)	(Conf)	(Unconf)
4 Apr 42	Circus 119	4	4	0	12	12	0	15	0
8 Apr 42	Rodeo	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	1
10 Apr 42	Rodeo	6	4	0	5	5	0	0	0
12 Apr 42	Circus 122	4	4	2	15	11	0	12	2
13 Apr 42	Rodeo	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
14 Apr 42	Circus 123	3	1	0	2	2	4	0	0
14 Apr 42	Rodeo	1	1	2	2	2	0	3	0

15 Apr 42	Circus 10 Gp C-1	3	4	2	3	3	4	1	0
16 Apr 42	Circus 126	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
16 Apr 42	Ramrod	4	1	3	2	2	8	1	0
16 Apr 42	Rodeo	0	1	0	3	2	0	0	0
17 Apr 42	Rodeo	0	1	0	1	1	0	2	0
17 Apr 42	Ramrod 10 Gp R-2	0	0	0	1	0	3	0	0
17 Apr 42	Circus 130	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
24 Apr 42	Circus 132	1	1	2	10	9	0	9	0
24 Apr 42	Rodeo	3	1	2	0	0	0	0	0
25 Apr 42	Circus 137	3	2	3	14	14	9	9	0
25 Apr 42	Ramrod 26	5	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
26 Apr 42	Circus 138	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
26 Apr 42	Rodeo	2	1	0	4	3	0	4	1
27 Apr 42	Ramrod	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0
27 Apr 42	Circus 141	10	8	0	13	12	0	11	2
27 Apr 42	Rodeo	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	0
28 Apr 42	Circus 144	3	5	1	6	6	1	4	0
29 Apr 42	Circus 145	2	2	2	2	2	0	2	0
30 Apr 42	Roadstead	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
30 Apr 42	Circus 148	5	4	3	7	5	2	6	2
30 Apr 42	Ramrod 31	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTALS		66	49	24	107	95	31	80	8

1 May

Fighter Command sent four Rodeos and one Circus to France during the day. Fw. Glunz had an inconclusive scrap with some Spitfires at 1400, and a Rodeo to Le Havre at 1600 encountered spirited resistance from JG 2, but the Geschwader's main effort was reserved for Circus No. 150, which left England for Marquise at about 1900. The Second and Third Gruppen scrambled and headed for Calais at their best climbing speed. Müncheberg and Priller led their pilots in attacks on the first formations sighted; such shallow penetration flights by the RAF left no time for maneuvering into position. The Third Gruppe dove on the Kenley Wing from 20,000 feet. Priller struck his target from behind at 200 yards and closed the range to fifty; the Spitfire half-rolled to its left and dove into the Channel. Three more Spitfires fell soon thereafter. The Second Gruppe engaged the Hornchurch and North Weald Wings, and chased the Spitfires almost to Dover before returning. Three Spitfires fell to Müncheberg and his men. One



A Focke-Wulf of the Second Gruppe Stab taxis out at Abbeville-Drucat. (E.C.P.A.)

Gruppe pilot collided with his victim, but bailed out without injury, and two Gruppe Focke-Wulfs sustained light damage in this combat.

Oblt. Johannes Schmidt was rested; Hptm. Rolf Hermichen replaced him as Kapitän of the 3rd Staffel.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 1 May 1942

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
5/1/42	Hptm.	Müncheberg	II CO	76	Spitfire	SW of Calais	7:31 PM	122+222 Sqd	yes
5/1/42	Hptm.	Müncheberg	II CO		Spitfire	5km N of Calais	7:40 PM		no
5/1/42	Uffz.	Krieg	5	1	Spitfire	Marquise	7:45 PM	122+222 Sqd	yes
5/1/42	Oblt.	Galland W-F.	6	7	Spitfire	Dover	7:45 PM	122+222 Sqd	yes
5/1/42	Uffz.	Vogt	6	4	Spitfire	Dover	7:46 PM	122+222 Sqd	yes
5/1/42	Hptm.	Priller	III CO	69	Spitfire	5km N of Calais	7:30 PM	457+485 +602 Sqd	yes
5/1/42	Lt.	Galland P.	8	9	Spitfire	unknown	7:32 PM	457+485 +602 Sqd	yes
5/1/42	Obfw.	Heitmann	8	4	Spitfire	unknown	7:34 PM	457+485 +602 Sqd	yes

2 May

The morning overcast persisted all day, and there was no flying.

Lt. Konrad von Donner reported to the Second Gruppe from instructor duty. Lt. Johann Aistleitner transferred from the First Gruppe to the Third.

3 May

Fighter Command dispatched two Rodeos, one Ramrod, and one Circus to France. Numerous Alarmstarts were made by the Geschwader, but the only formation attacked was the Ramrod to Abbeville-Drucat. The Second Gruppe did not make contact, but the Third Gruppe shot down three Spitfires from the escort. The bombers killed one Second Gruppe groundcrewman and injured two on Drucat. Two First Gruppe FW 190s were damaged slightly while landing on Arques after a combat mission.

4 May

The RAF flew several missions to the Le Havre area. JG 26 maintained its standing patrols over the Pas de Calais and made several Alarmstarts, but was only peripherally involved in the fighting to its west. One First Gruppe FW 190 belly-landed on Arques after sustaining damage from a Spitfire.

The 5th Staffel's Oblt. Wolfgang Kosse was transferred to a gunnery course, and was then banished to JG 5 in Norway. When Kosse next joined a combat unit – Sturmstaffel 1 – it was as a Flieger (private); his transgression is unknown. Oblt. Wilhelm-Ferdinand "Wutz" Galland transferred into the 5th Staffel as Staffelführer, or prospective Staffel Kapitän.

5 May

A large radar plot leaving England in mid-afternoon brought the Second Gruppe into the air; the rest of the Geschwader was kept at readiness until the direction of the enemy flight was determined. The RAF force split, and the Second Gruppe attacked the western group, which proved to be the Middle Wallop Wing, flying flank support for the main force. The Gruppe attacked, and after an extended combat Oblt. Wutz Galland shot down a Spitfire, the only loss for either side. The First and Third Gruppen scrambled and headed toward Lille,

the target for Circus No. 157's six Bostons. Hptm. Priller led the Third Gruppe in a broad sweep to the west as he climbed to attack position, paralleled the formation as it turned away from the target, and then dove on No. 313 Squadron, flying at 22,000 feet as top cover for the close escort force. Priller pressed his attack to minimum range; parts flew off his target and it dove away to crash southwest of Ypres. The rest of his Gruppe dove through No. 313 Squadron to attack the Hornchurch Wing's middle squadron, No. 122. The British formation was split apart, and the small groups of Spitfires made easy targets for Hptm. Seifert and his First Gruppe, which had now arrived. In the next several minutes, four Spitfires crashed along the Belgian-French border. Only one pilot survived; he evaded capture and returned to England. There were no German casualties.

6 May

A noon Circus to Caen missed its target; III/JG 2 defended, and filed a number of unverifiable claims for Spitfires. Late-evening Circuses to Boulogne and a Calais silk factory were missed by most of the defending JG 26 formations. Hptm. Müncheberg picked off a straggling No. 303 Sqd. Spitfire northwest of Cap Gris Nez for the Geschwader's only claim of the day, and Fighter Command's only loss. Pips Priller flew three unsuccessful sorties, and commented sarcastically in his diary, "Heil Jafü!"

JG 26 Victory Claims: 3–6 May 1942

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
5/3/42	Oblt.	Laube	7	2	Spitfire	Calais	4:03 PM	174+303 Sqd	yes
5/3/42	Oblt.	Mietusch	7 CO	17	Spitfire	Calais	4:05 PM	174+303 Sqd	yes
5/3/42	Lt.	Galland P.	8	10	Spitfire	Calais	4:00 PM	174+303 Sqd	unk
5/5/42	Hptm.	Seifert	I CO	33	Spitfire	Ballieul	3:40 PM	122 Sqd	yes
5/5/42	Lt.	Beese	1	4	Spitfire	N of Hazebrouck	3:40 PM	122 Sqd	yes
5/5/42	Oblt.	Galland W-F.	5 CO	8	Spitfire	Boulogne	2:53 PM	41 Sqd	yes
5/5/42	Hptm.	Priller	III CO	70	Spitfire	11km SW of Ypres	3:40 PM	313 Sqd	yes
5/5/42	Oblt.	Mietusch	7 CO	18	Spitfire	3km NW of Poperinghe	3:35 PM	122 Sqd	yes
5/5/42	Obfw.	Heitmann	8	5	Spitfire	Kemmel	3:55 PM	122 Sqd	yes
5/6/42	Hptm.	Müncheberg	II CO	77	Spitfire	NW of Cap Gris Nez	6:53 PM	303 Sqd	yes

7 May

Twice during the day the Geschwader was scrambled to counter RAF formations, only to be recalled when these were found to contain only fighters. A late-evening Circus to Ostend was intercepted by the Third Gruppe, but the combat was inconclusive; neither side suffered any losses.

8 May

The Geschwader carried out routine patrols and Alarmstarts; no Allied aircraft were contacted.

9 May

Geschwader aircraft took off before 0630 in response to a Fighter Command sweep from Calais to Boulogne; no encounters were recorded. A noon-hour sweep of the same area brought the same response – Focke-Wulfs were scrambled, patrolled fixed areas, and were ordered to land when the composition of the intruding force was confirmed. Shortly after 1300 a large RAF

formation brought the entire Geschwader into the air. This was Circus No. 168, which targeted, but missed, the Hazebrouck rail yards. Hptm. Priller led his Third Gruppe into position to attack the withdrawing main force near Poperinghe, but aborted his attack when he was cut off by the Second Gruppe. Müncheberg's bounce fragmented the No. 10 Group Wing, flying close escort. No. 118 Squadron lost four Spitfires; a fifth crash-landed in England. No. 501 Squadron attempted to aid No. 118, and lost a Spitfire for its pains. The claims by the returning RAF pilots totalled only one damaged FW 190, but the 5th Staffel's Lt. Heinz Reiche was shot down and killed near Watten, possibly by a pilot who did not return.

Priller led his Gruppe in a broad circle and attacked the remnants of the No. 10 Group Wing's formation over the coast. Priller chose a target, closed to thirty yards, and opened fire. Large parts flew off the Spitfire, and it dove straight down and crashed into the Channel.

In the meantime the First Gruppe was battling the support wings between Hazebrouck and Calais. The 1st Staffel's Oblt. Haiböck shot down a Spitfire, but lost his wingman, Uffz. Herbert Hofmann, who disappeared and crashed near Reitwald, probably the victim of a trailing Spitfire. Lt. Beese claimed another Spitfire. Off the coast JG 2 claimed a Spitfire and a Tomahawk.

Later in the afternoon another large RAF force over the Channel brought four German formations into the air. There were Bostons in this beehive, which flew east along the coast to their target, some oil tanks at Bruges. The First and Third Gruppen made contact, but only the former unit scored, accounting for Fighter Command's only loss of the evening, a No. 72 Sqd. Spitfire.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 9 May 1942

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
5/9/42	Lt.	Beese	1	5	Spitfire	4km N of Ardres	1:40 PM	350+457 Sqd	yes
5/9/42	Oblt.	Haiböck	1 CO	13	Spitfire	2km N of Cassel	1:40 PM	350+457 Sqd	unk
5/9/42	Oblt.	Hermichen	3 CO	14	Spitfire	10km NW of Coxyde	5:39 PM	72 Sqd	yes
5/9/42	Hptm.	Müncheberg	II CO		Spitfire	15km S of Gravelines	1:43 PM	118+501 Sqd	no
5/9/42	Hptm.	Müncheberg	II CO		Spitfire	15km S of Gravelines	1:44 PM	118+501 Sqd	no
5/9/42	Oblt.	Ebersberger	4 CO	23	Spitfire	Gravelines	1:44 PM	118+501 Sqd	yes
5/9/42	Obfw.	Roth	4	14	Spitfire	Le Touquet	1:55 PM	118+501 Sqd	yes
5/9/42	Lt.	Sternberg	5	8	Spitfire	W of Calais	1:46 PM	118+501 Sqd	yes
5/9/42	Hptm.	Priller	III CO	71	Spitfire	3km N of Gravelines	1:40 PM	118+501 Sqd	yes

JG 26 Casualties: 9 May 1942

Date	Rank	Name	Cas	Unit	Aircraft	WNr	Mkgs	Place	Time	Cause
5/9/42	Uffz.	Hofmann, Herbert	KIA	1	FW 190A-1	049		N of Cassel	1:45 PM	Spitfire
5/9/42	Lt.	Reiche, Heinz	KIA	5	FW 190A-2	5234	bk 7	Eperlecques-Watten		Spitfire

The Fighter Command claim and loss summary prepared for Air Minister Sinclair ends on this date. The final section of the augmented table is given below. For the entire period covered by the document (1 March–9 May), the confirmed fighter claims by Luftflotte 3 day fighters total 191. Fighter Command's aircraft losses total 174. Even assuming that some of the German claims are missing, it is apparent that the Luftwaffe's claims verification system worked well on the Channel Front. The ratio of RAF Fighter Command's fighter claims

to Luftflotte 3's actual fighter losses (i.e, fighters surveyed with greater than sixty per cent damage) is 3.5:1. Although polemics on the subject of over-claiming may be interesting, the comparison of greatest historical significance is that between Fighter Command's fighter losses and Luftflotte 3's fighter losses. The ratio is 4.5:1; nine Spitfires were lost for every two Bf 109s and FW 190s that sustained irreparable combat damage.

RAF FIGHTER COMMAND OFFENSIVE OPERATIONS
Luftflotte 3 and RAF Fighter Claims and Losses: 1-9 May 1942

DATE	RAF MISSION	LF3 LOSSES			RAF LOSSES		LF3 CLAIMS		
		RAF CLAIMS		ACTUAL (>60%)	(Fighter Cmd)		JG 2 (Conf)	JG 26	
		Dest	Prob		A/C	Pilots		(Conf)	(Unconf)
1 May 42	Rodeo	1	1	1	2	1	3	0	0
1 May 42	Circus 150	0	4	0	6	6	3	7	1
3 May 42	Rodeo	3	2	1	0	0	0	0	0
3 May 42	Circus 154	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
3 May 42	Ramrod	0	0	0	3	2	2	2	1
4 May 42	Circus 153	6	0	2	3	3	7	0	0
4 May 42	Rodeo	1	2	0	4	3	8	0	0
5 May 42	Rodeo	2	3	0	2	1	1	0	0
5 May 42	Circus 157	2	4	0	6	5	0	6	0
6 May 42	Circus 159	1	1	0	1	1	5	1	0
9 May 42	Circus 168	1	0	2	8	8	2	6	3
TOTALS		18	18	6	35	30	31	22	5

10-16 May

A persistent bad weather front kept Fighter Command on the ground in England. The Geschwader flew only routine patrols and test flights.

17 May

The weather cleared, and Ramrod No. 33 sent six Bostons with heavy fighter escort to bomb the Boulogne docks. The Geschwader was scrambled at 1113, while the bombers were still off Hastings, and was ordered to assemble over St. Pol. The Focke-Wulfs were shielded from the Bostons by the large direct escort and the supporting sweeps, which penetrated as far inland as St. Omer, but were in excellent position to attack several of the Spitfire wings. Hptm. Priller led the Third Gruppe in an attack on No. 313 Squadron, the high squadron in the Hornchurch Wing, flying close escort. Priller made a textbook stern attack on the rear Spitfire, closing to twenty yards before opening fire. Large pieces blew off the Spitfire, which burst into flames and fell into a vertical dive to crash between Guines and Audembert, its Czech pilot dead. Lt. Aistleitner, a Rottenführer in Priller's Stabsschwarm, downed a Spitfire, as did Oblt. Borris of the 8th Staffel. Oblt. Seifert's First Gruppe attacked the other two Hornchurch squadrons, and shot down three Spitfires.

In the meantime the Second Gruppe, flying farther inland, had attacked the Kenley Wing. Fw. Glunz downed a No. 602 Squadron fighter north of St. Omer; the Gruppe chased the Squadron over the Channel and splashed a second, whose pilot drowned before rescuers could reach him. The No. 10 Group Wing, flying in rear support, lost a Spitfire in mid-Channel to a JG 2 pilot. The German controllers called off the pursuit at 1159 and issued landing orders. Two Focke-Wulfs made forced landings owing to combat damage. One Jabostaffel Messerschmitt aborted its take-off from Arques, and another force-landed off

Boulogne with a bad engine, but it is not known if they were on a fighter-bomber or a defensive mission.

British air-sea rescue forces were active in the Channel in the afternoon, and the 8th Staffel's Oblt. Kranefeld claimed one of the Spitfire escorts, but no RAF loss is known. Some documents show a claim for Hptm. Müncheberg over St. Omer at 1735; this was either a photo-reconnaissance Spitfire or a clerical error.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 17 May 1942

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
5/17/42	Hptm.	Seifert	I CO	34	Spitfire	2km NW of Wissant	11:40 AM	64+122 Sqd	yes
5/17/42	Lt.	Schauder	3	11	Spitfire	N of Desvres	11:32 AM	64+122 Sqd	yes
5/17/42	Fw.	Willius	3	18	Spitfire	3km S of Calais	11:40 AM	64+122 Sqd	yes
5/17/42	Hptm.	Müncheberg	II CO		Spitfire	Guines-St Omer	5:35 PM		no
5/17/42	Fw.	Glunz	4	15	Spitfire	Ardres	11:35 AM	602 Sqd	yes
5/17/42	Obfw.	Philipp	4	12	Spitfire	3km NE of Calais	11:37 AM	602 Sqd	yes
5/17/42	Hptm.	Priller	III CO	72	Spitfire	S of Guines-Audembert	11:33 AM	313 Sqd	yes
5/17/42	Lt.	Aistleitner	III St	7	Spitfire	15km NW of Calais	11:43 AM	313 Sqd	yes
5/17/42	Oblt.	Borris	8 CO	18	Spitfire	6km NW of Sangatte	11:50 AM	64+122 Sqd	yes
5/17/42	Oblt.	Kranefeld	8	1	Spitfire	unknown	2:45 PM		yes

18 May

Routine patrols and Alarmstarts were flown. No Allied aircraft were contacted.

19 May

Routine patrols and Alarmstarts were flown, without result. A Fighter Command Rodeo to Le Havre met resistance from JG 2 Bf 109s.

20 May

The Jagdstaffeln flew fruitless patrols and Alarmstarts. The Jabostaffel raided Brighton. The Jabo pilots were flying several missions a week during this period. Little documentation of these raids has survived other than the casualty reports that were written after each of their frequent losses. One survivor has been located; here is Oswald Fischer's story of his last mission:

“On the 20th I was ordered by Hptm. Plunser to lead a mission. I worked out a raid to Brighton, since we had not visited that area for some time, and few wanted to fly there because of the long stretch over the water. I found a Feldwebel who was willing to accompany me as my wingman. I planned to go inland about twenty miles before we hit the harbor, and so we did. All worked out fine – low flight over the Channel and hedgehopping over the British countryside and right into the harbor at Brighton. I saw a large ship and told my wingman, ‘Let’s hit it hard!’ In we went. The flak sprayed like a firehose, but we made it, and struck the ship with both bombs.

“As we exited, I got hit. I could hear the impact, but everything seemed to be all right. As soon as we were over the water my temperature gauge shot up to ‘hot’, and I could smell the coolant, so I told my wingman to keep going in low flight toward home base. My engine started to smell very bad. I turned around and belly-landed my airplane in a field. I tried to blow it up, but the explosive charge would not go off. I became a POW. I regretted my fate, but it was better than drowning in the Channel.”

Fischer's career as a fighter-bomber pilot ended after thirty-one Jabo missions.

21–22 May

The Geschwader was grounded owing to bad weather.

23 May

The First and Third Gruppen were scrambled at 1130 after reports of an RAF formation southeast of Dungeness; this was the Debden Wing on a Rodeo. Hptm. Priller led the Third Gruppe in an attack on fifty Spitfires east of Boulogne, but after a prolonged combat he returned to Wevelghem at 1243 with no success to report. He commented in his diary that evening, “Pech gehabt türmen-türmen”, or, loosely, “Bad luck piles up deeper and deeper.” Oblt. Naumann, one of his pilots, shot a Spitfire into the Channel, as did two First Gruppe pilots; Lt Dippel pursued his victim to the English coast before downing it, but could not get his claim confirmed owing to the lack of a witness. The Second Gruppe took off late to intercept a reported rear cover wing, but failed to make contact.

24 May

A late-evening Rodeo over Hardelot to St. Omer resulted in a number of combats, but no significant loss to either side. The Geschwader’s pilots claimed no victories. One First Gruppe Focke-Wulf force-landed on Coquelles, and a Third Gruppe aircraft force-landed near Pervyse, both with engine damage.

25 May

A morning Rodeo to Ostend brought the First Gruppe up in defense. Contact was made off Nieuport, and three Spitfires were claimed. The Third Gruppe was ordered up in response to a later RAF sweep of the same area, but failed to make contact.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 23–25 May 1942

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
5/23/42	Lt.	Dippel	2	8	Spitfire	Channel off Folkestone	12:05 PM		no
5/23/42	Fw.	Willius	3	19	Spitfire	10km N of Calais	12:00 PM	350 Sqd	yes
5/23/42	Oblt.	Naumann	9	8	Spitfire	N of Calais	11:52 AM	350 Sqd	yes
5/25/42	Fw.	Babenz	1	14	Spitfire	near Nieuport	11:40 AM	222 Sqd	yes
5/25/42	Fw.	Jäckel E.	2	7	Spitfire	15km NW of Dunkirk	11:45 AM	222 Sqd	unk
5/25/42	Oblt.	Schmidt J.	3	7	Spitfire	near Nieuport	11:50 AM	222 Sqd	yes

26 May

Most of the Geschwader stayed on the ground owing to bad weather, but the 1st Staffel’s Uffz. Konrad von Jutrzenka claimed a Spitfire over the Channel in mid-morning. The identity of his opponent has not been traced.

The Jabostaffel began transferring to Caen-Carpiquet. It and 10(Jabo)/JG 2 were now subordinated to Jafü 3 for operations, and were to be based together at Caen. The new base was a pre-war French airfield, and was well equipped for handling the heavily-laden fighter-bombers.

27 May

Bad weather again restricted operations. A Jabo raid was flown; the 6th Staffel’s Uffz. Wilhelm Mayer flew out to escort them back, and received credit for a



A10(Jabo)/JG 26 Bf 109F-4/B, W.Nr. 8352, photographed on Caen-Carpiquet in late May. Fw. Otto Görtz was killed in this aircraft on 6 June. (*E.C.P.A.*)

combat mission. It is not known whether he actually encountered RAF aircraft or was given mission credit for flying over the English coast.

29 May

After a day on the ground the First Gruppe was up early in response to Rodeo No. 55, which crossed the coast at Ostend and turned west to Dunkirk. Fw. Babenz shot down a No. 72 Sqd. Spitfire whose pilot bailed out and landed successfully in the Channel. No. 401 Squadron saw the pilot land and orbited the site while sending “mayday” reports and fending off attacks by several FW 190s. Their reports were not received, and later patrols found no trace of the pilot. A late-morning sweep was matched by the Second Gruppe’s scramble, and an RAF formation detected in mid-afternoon led to the take-off of the Third Gruppe. Neither Gruppe was ordered to attack; it is obvious that the Jafü 2 controllers were following orders to conserve Luftflotte 3’s limited fighter resources.

30 May

This was yet another day of patrols and Alarmstarts. The Second Gruppe engaged RAF fighters in mid-afternoon and again on a late-evening mission, but without result. The First and Third Gruppe’s scrambles did not make contact with Allied aircraft.

31 May

Several Fighter Command Rodeos approached the coast during the day. Each brought orders for a single Gruppe, rather than the entire Geschwader, to scramble. Apparently this was now to be the standard reponse by the Jafü. Two RAF formations headed west for Dieppe and combat with JG 2, and were not engaged by JG 26. A late-evening Rodeo brought both the First and Second Gruppen into the air when it became apparent that its target was Abbeville. A fire broke out in Fw. Gottfried Dietze’s cockpit, and he quickly landed back at



A close-up of the rear fuselage of W.Nr. 8352, showing the “falling bomb” Staffel identification marking, which has been oversprayed after application. (E.C.P.A.)

Arques, suffering slight facial burns. The Second Gruppe intercepted the Spitfires over Abbeville-Drucat, and shot down three.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 26–31 May 1942

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
5/26/42	Uffz.	Jutrzenka v.	I	1	Spitfire	Channel	10:10 AM		yes
5/29/42	Fw.	Babenz	I	15	Spitfire	Channel	8:20 AM	72 Sqd	yes
5/31/42	Hptm.	Müncheberg	II CO	78	Spitfire	S of Crécy forest	7:37 PM	485 Sqd	yes
5/31/42	Hptm.	Müncheberg	II CO	79	Spitfire	Quend Plage les Pins	7:41 PM	302 Sqd	yes
5/31/42	Oblt.	Weiss	6	3	Spitfire	Abbeville	7:40 PM	485 Sqd	yes

JG 26 Casualties: 20–31 May 1942

Date	Rank	Name	Cas	Unit	Aircraft	WNr	Mkgs	Place	Time	Cause
5/20/42	Uffz.	Fischer, Oswald	POW	10(J)	Bf 109F-4/R1	7232	wh 11+ bomb	Beachy Head	12:05 PM	ship flak
5/31/42	Fw.	Dietze, Gottfried	WIFA	1	FW 190A-2	5295		Arques a/f	7:57 PM	cockpit fire

A Fighter Command intelligence appreciation dated 19 June claimed that 205 Luftwaffe fighters had been destroyed between 1 January and 31 May for the loss of 242 Royal Air Force fighters. The true picture was much bleaker for the Allies. During this period the combat losses of the two Kanalgeschwader totalled only sixty-seven fighters and forty-seven pilots; the fighter loss ratio was 3.6:1 in the Germans' favor.

Chapter Ten

FOCKE-WULF SUMMER

June – August 1942

1 June

Fighter Command planned three Circuses for what promised to be a clear late-spring day. A preliminary sweep of Calais by two Spitfire wings brought five German formations into the air, but the Allied fighters did not tarry over France and were not attacked. Next up was Circus No. 178, which contained twelve Hurribombers escorted and supported by fourteen Spitfire squadrons. There was German shipping in the Channel which the Jafü 2 controllers had to be careful to protect; the Circus would be countered with a minimum of force. The RAF formation was heading east, so the Second Gruppe and the nearby JG 2 units to the west were kept on the ground in reserve. The Geschwader Stab and the First and Third Gruppen were scrambled at 1320 and ordered to make for Ostend at their maximum rate of climb. The controllers quickly separated the Circus plot into two formations. The larger one contained the Hurribombers, which bombed Bruges without hindrance from the Focke-Wulfs. Instead, the controllers vectored the Germans toward the smaller formation, the four-squadron Debden Wing, which was flying a target support sweep. It made an ideal target, and was overtaken by the Germans as it withdrew from Ostend. Major Schöpfel ordered one Staffel to make a quick dive through the formation, which was stepped down by squadrons. The Spitfire wing broke into the supposed attack. When it attempted to re-form after the dozen Focke-Wulfs had passed through, No. 111 Squadron's formation loosened up, and it swung wide of the rest of the wing. This was the opportunity Hptm. Seifert had been waiting for; he led the First Gruppe in a diving attack that downed two No. 111 Sqd. Spitfires and then carried through to the low squadron, No. 65, where the wing commander was flying. He and his wingman were shot down into the Channel and killed. The 3rd Staffel's Oblt. Schmidt then attacked two Spitfires in quick succession. Both of these pilots survived; one was picked up by an RAF rescue launch, and the second crash-landed on Manston with severe injuries. Three seriously damaged No. 111 Squadron fighters made it back to Debden.

The Third Gruppe remained above and up sun until Seifert's Gruppe dove. Hptm. Priller then began his attack. Within seconds, three Spitfires from the high squadron, No. 350, were spiralling toward the Channel. The battle carried through to No. 71 (Eagle) Squadron. The two Spitfire squadrons split up into smaller sections and fought the Focke-Wulfs for several minutes. At 1354 the Jafü ordered the recall, and the surviving pilots extricated themselves and



Oblt. Klaus Mietusch returns from a June mission. This snapshot originally included Lieselotte Hays, a Luftwaffe Helferin (female auxiliary) on the base at Wevelghem and his girlfriend at the time. Her only copy of the print was chewed up by her jealous dog. (Hays)

important Lille area. The FW 190's high speed and rate of climb allowed the Germans to cover the Channel without hazarding its fighters on vulnerable coastal bases.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 1 June 1942

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
6/1/42	Maj.	Schöpfel	Ge CO	40	Spitfire	unknown	1:55 PM	65+111 Sqd	yes
6/1/42	Hptm.	Seifert	I CO	35	Spitfire	Ostend area	1:45 PM	111 Sqd	unk
6/1/42	Obfw.	Leibold	I St	9	Spitfire	2km N of Zeebrugge	1:50 PM	111 Sqd	yes
6/1/42	Fw.	Babenz	1	16	Spitfire	PQ 22456	1:50 PM	65+111 Sqd	yes
6/1/42	Oblt.	Zink	2 CO	20	Spitfire	6km NE of Dunkirk	1:55 PM	65+111 Sqd	yes
6/1/42	Obfw.	Eichinger	3	1	Spitfire	NE of Ostend	1:48 PM	65+111 Sqd	yes
6/1/42	Oblt.	Schmidt J.	3	8	Spitfire	NE of Ostend	1:48 PM	65 Sqd	yes
6/1/42	Oblt.	Schmidt J.	3	9	Spitfire	NW of Ostend	1:51 PM	65 Sqd	yes
6/1/42	Hptm.	Priller	III CO	73	Spitfire	5km N of Blankenbergh	1:45 PM	350 Sqd	yes
6/1/42	Lt.	Aistleitner	III St	8	Spitfire	unknown	1:51 PM	350 Sqd	yes
6/1/42	Lt.	Aistleitner	III St	9	Spitfire	unknown	6:43 PM		yes
6/1/42	Oblt.	Westphal	7	12	Spitfire	20km N of Dunkirk	1:55 PM	71+350 Sqd	yes
6/1/42	Lt.	Galland P.	8	11	Spitfire	unknown	1:46 PM	71+350 Sqd	yes
6/1/42	Oblt.	Borris	8 CO	19	Spitfire	8km N of La Panne	1:58 PM	71+350 Sqd	unk

2 June

An early-morning Roadstead was met over the Somme Estuary by the entire Second Gruppe, which shot down one Hurribomber and damaged one Spitfire but lost Fw. Karl Schieffer, who crashed into the Channel west of Berck sur Mer. The Second Gruppe was scrambled again at 1030 and ordered to orbit St. Omer with the First Gruppe until the target of a new RAF incursion became known. This new formation proved to be a two-Wing Rodeo, which approached St. Omer and then turned back to the southwest, putting the waiting German fighters in an ideal position to attack the high wing. Hptm. Seifert made a direct approach from the rear, while Hptm. Müncheberg led his Gruppe into a continuous layer of thin cloud two thousand feet above No. 403 Squadron, which

was flying top cover at 27,000 feet, and raced to head it off. The inexperienced Canadian squadron was led by S/L Al Deere, one of the Battle of Britain's most famous pilots, who had just returned to England after a six-month tour in the USA and had no first-hand experience fighting Focke-Wulfs. Seifert's formation was sighted in the clear air behind the Squadron, closing fast. When they had reached the proper distance, Deere ordered a pre-arranged three-way break with the intention of meeting the approaching fighters head-on. Halfway through this complicated maneuver, Deere's Spitfires were hit from the clouds above one flank by Müncheberg's Gruppe. Deere's dozen pilots fought for their lives while their comrades in the other Spitfire squadrons, mindful of their orders to avoid combat in tactically unfavorable conditions, left them to their fate and returned to England.

The Canadian pilots had to evade the German attacks and break for home as best they could. Three Spitfires made it back to their field at Rochford. Two more force-landed at Manston; one of these was a complete write-off. The other seven planes came down in the Channel. Only one of their pilots was rescued. The survivors claimed no victories over the Focke-Wulfs. This battle resulted in six confirmed and two unconfirmed JG 26 claims.

Several Rodeos and Circuses in the afternoon brought much maneuvering by Geschwader formations, but little combat. The 6th Staffel's Uffz. Mayer made five Alarmstarts during the day, but contacted the RAF only once, during the 1030 mission. JG 2 made several successful interceptions, and claimed at least eight Spitfires.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 2 June 1942

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
6/2/42	Hptm.	Seifert	I CO	36	Spitfire	5km S of St. Valéry	11:25 AM	403 Sqd	yes
6/2/42	Oblt.	Haiböck	1 CO	14	Spitfire	S of Somme Estuary	10:55 AM	403 Sqd	yes
6/2/42	Fw.	Babenz	1	17	Spitfire	15km W of Somme Estuary	11:05 AM	403 Sqd	yes
6/2/42	Fw.	Jäckel E.	2	8	Spitfire	NW of Crécy	11:05 AM	403 Sqd	yes
6/2/42	Hptm.	Müncheberg	II CO	80	Spitfire	SW of Abbeville	11:01 AM	403 Sqd	yes
6/2/42	Hptm.	Müncheberg	II CO	81	Spitfire	15km W of Etaples	11:07 AM	403 Sqd	unk
6/2/42	Obfw.	Roth	4	15	Spitfire	mid-Channel	11:04 AM	403 Sqd	yes
6/2/42	Obfw.	Philipp	4	13	Spitfire	W of Berck (mid-Channel)	11:05 AM	403 Sqd	unk
6/2/42	Oblt.	Galland W-F.	5 CO	9	Spitfire	Somme Estuary	7:10 AM	64+174 Sqd	yes
6/2/42	Oblt.	Galland W-F.	5 CO	10	Spitfire	Somme Estuary	7:18 AM	64+174 Sqd	yes
6/2/42	Lt.	Sternberg	5	9	Spitfire	between Berck and Hastings	7:25 AM	64+174 Sqd	unk

3 June

The pilots of the Geschwader spent the day patrolling the Pas de Calais while a number of large RAF formations flew west to attack Le Havre and Cherbourg. Obfw. Leibold of the First Gruppe Stab picked off a Spitfire west of Le Touquet, but the day's laurels belonged to JG 2, whose pilots claimed twenty-three Spitfires while suffering no losses other than combat damage to a single Focke-Wulf. JG 26 lost one pilot, Lt. Ulrich Segler, who crashed for unknown reasons while returning from an uneventful scramble.

4 June

Again today the Geschwader was held back from attacking the RAF formations, while JG 2 had great success – eight Spitfires were claimed, for a total of fifty in five days. Again JG 2 sustained no losses. Three I/JG 26 aircraft force-landed



Third Gruppe Kommandeur Hptm. Pips Priller reviews the mission just completed with his wingman, Lt. Johann Aistleitner (KIA 14 Jan 44). The seventy-three victory bars date the photograph in June. (*Aistleitner via Roba*)



The 2nd Staffel's Fw. Gottfried Dietze seated in the cockpit of his FW 190A-2 "black 12" – Arques, June. (*Dietze via Meyer*)

in bad weather. All sustained damage in what were classed as combat sorties, but it is not known whether the damage was combat-related.

5 June

Fighter Command scheduled a two-part Circus to the widely-spaced targets of Ostend and Le Havre to split the defenses, and utilized a new method of rendezvous to delay detection by German radar. The Allied fighters and bombers were now to meet below 500 feet altitude, in complete radio silence, and remain at minimum altitude until the coast was in sight. All aircraft were then pulled up in steep climbs to evade the coastal flak belt. The intent was to give the German fighters insufficient time to climb above the RAF formations. The more aggressive wing commanders, such as Biggin Hill's Jamie Rankin, soon applied the same principle to the fighters-only Rodeos, which would cross the Channel at sea level, pass over the French coast in maximum-boost climbs, and attack any FW 190s spotted beneath them. When the Focke-Wulfs reached their altitude or above, it was "Everybody out!", and the Spitfires were to dive for the Channel and make for England as rapidly as possible.

The tactic initially met with some success. The Biggin Hill Wing's No. 72 Squadron, flying rear cover to the Le Havre raid, caught some Bf 109s climbing away from Abbeville toward Le Havre and shot down two. These were JG 2 aircraft; it is not known why they were flying from Abbeville. Abbeville's own unit, II/JG 26, was also involved with the Biggin Hill Spitfires, and claimed two; one Gruppe FW 190 belly-landed on Poix with combat damage. JG 2 proclaimed a great success versus the Le Havre raid. Their claims for at least twenty-one Spitfires were confirmed; Fighter Command's actual losses appear to have been six fighters and five pilots. The Jafü did not succeed in bringing the rest of JG 26 into contact with the Allied formations. The Circus to Ostend, which was well within the Geschwader's zone of responsibility, encountered no German fighters.

6 June

Fighter Command repeated the previous day's tactics in a three-Wing Rodeo to Abbeville. Today the Second Gruppe scrambled and climbed away to the south, returning when they had reached the Biggin Hill Wing's altitude of 25,000 feet. The Spitfires then beat a rapid retreat, and contact was not made. The RAF's major effort was a Circus to Cherbourg; JG 2 beat it off, claiming at least thirteen Spitfires.

The Jabostaffel's Fw. Otto Görtz was hit by British anti-aircraft fire while raiding Bournemouth, and dove into the Channel on the return flight.

7 June

Hptm. Johannes Seifert, the First Gruppe's quiet, reliable Kommandeur, was awarded the Knight's Cross for his thirty-six aerial victories.

The 2nd Staffel's Lt. Gottfried Helmholz crashed on Arques while returning from a test flight, and was killed.

10(Jabo)/JG 26, which was flying from Caen-Carpiquet with 10(Jabo)/JG 2, was separated entirely from the First Gruppe and was subordinated to Jafü 3 for both administration and operations.

8 June

Fighter Command's major operation was Circus No. 191 to Bruges. Its dozen Bostons were escorted and supported by twenty-seven Spitfire squadrons. The diversionary sweeps of the Pas de Calais were especially strong, and attracted most of the defenders' attention. The North Weald Wing's sweep of St. Omer caught the Geschwader Stab and the First Gruppe beneath them; No. 121 (Eagle) Squadron was ordered to attack, and claimed four fighters shot down before the Focke-Wulfs disappeared into the clouds. The Geschwader suffered one loss. Lt. Viktor Hilgendorff of the Stabsschwarm bailed out near Arques with severe injuries that ultimately cost him a leg. The First Gruppe claimed three Spitfires, but the North Weald Wing escaped unscathed.

The Kenley and Hornchurch Wings reached St. Omer a few minutes later, and found the defenders waiting. Pilots from the Second and Third Gruppen shot down four Spitfires. One Second Gruppe FW 190 had a tire shot out, resulting in further damage while landing at Drucat.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 3–8 June 1942

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
6/3/42	Obfw.	Leibold	I St	10	Spitfire	20km N of Le Touquet	4:53 PM		yes
6/5/42	Fw.	Glunz	4	16	Spitfire	WNW of Ault	3:50 PM	133+401 Sqds	unk
6/5/42	Obfw.	Bierwirth	5	4	Spitfire	Somme Estuary	3:45 PM	133+401 Sqds	yes
6/8/42	Uffz.	Jutrzenka v.	1	2	Spitfire	6km NW of Dunkirk	1:56 PM		yes
6/8/42	Fw.	Willius	3	20	Spitfire	5km SW of Arques	1:40 PM		yes
6/8/42	Uffz.	Scheyda	3	1	Spitfire	N of Hazebrouck	1:45 PM		yes
6/8/42	Obfw.	Philipp	4	14	Spitfire	WNW of Dunkirk	1:58 PM	Hornchurch+ Kenley Wings	yes
6/8/42	Fw.	Glunz	4	17	Spitfire	WNW of Dunkirk	1:59 PM	Hornchurch+ Kenley Wings	yes
6/8/42	Uffz.	Vogt	6	5	Spitfire	Dunkirk	2:03 PM	Hornchurch+ Kenley Wings	yes
6/8/42	Ogfr.	Hager V.	7	1	Spitfire	unknown		Hornchurch+ Kenley Wings	unk

9 June

Several Geschwader formations were scrambled during the day to investigate Rodeos, but no contact was ordered or made.

Oblt. Hans Ragotzi was shot down by Spitfires while on a late-afternoon Jabo mission against shipping along the English coast. He apparently survived his ditching, but was not rescued owing to approaching darkness, even though his co-ordinates were broadcast by his wingman on an open radio channel. His body eventually washed ashore at Hardelet.

10 June

The probationary status attached to Oblt. Wutz Galland's appointment as leader of the 5th Staffel was withdrawn, making him a fully-fledged Staffel Kapitän. He now had ten air victories and a growing reputation as a competent formation leader.

11 June

Routine patrols and Alarmstarts were carried out in response to RAF activity in the Channel. The Allied formations were only Rodeos, and the Geschwader was not ordered to attack, even though one Spitfire wing penetrated twenty miles inland from Boulogne.



Two 2nd Staffel groundcrewmembers work on "black 12", while a third tends to the rabbit hutches – Arques, June. (*Dietze via Meyer*)

The Ergänzungsjagdgruppe West sent the Geschwader its first draft of replacement pilots in some time. Uffz. Wilhelm Hofmann was assigned to the 1st Staffel; Uffz. Peter Crump, to the 5th; Fw. August Golub, to the 9th; and Fw. Karl Niesel, to the 10th Staffel, the Jabostaffel. The next day Lt. Wolfgang Neu arrived direct from Jagdfliegerschule 5, and was assigned to the 3rd Staffel.

14–16 June

Routine patrols, training flights, and test flights were carried out. Bad weather restricted flight operations.

17 June

Routine patrols and Alarmstarts were carried out in response to RAF activity in the Channel. At 1605 Uffz. Peter Crump made his first Alarmstart with the Second Gruppe, but the Allied formations turned away, and the Gruppe had landed by 1650.

18 June

Routine patrols and Alarmstarts were carried out in response to RAF fighter activity over the Channel. The Geschwader was not ordered to attack the only formation to cross the coast; the Spitfires reached a point twelve miles east of Berck sur Mer before turning back.

10(Jabo)/JG 26 withdrew to Le Bourget to begin its conversion to FW 190s. In its thirty-two missions in the Bf 109F-4/R1, the Staffel had claimed the destruction of eight railroad installations, eight barracks, six ships, five factories, two gasoline storage tanks, and two harbor installations.



8th Staffel groundcrewmen Gödecker (engine mechanic) and Rüterkamp (parachute rigger) pose beside Oblt. Karl Borris's FW 190A-2 "black 7" (W.Nr. 216) at Wevelghem. The flak position behind Gödecker was later destroyed in an air attack. The nineteen victory bars date the photograph in June. (*G. Schmidt*)

19 June

Patrols were sent at various times to cover Ostend, Calais, and Cap Gris Nez, but the Allied fighters did not cross the coast, and no contact was made. An RAF flight along the Belgian coast was met off Zeebrugge by II/JG 1, which had recently been equipped with FW 190s and was now flying from Woensdrecht. Five Spitfires were claimed for the loss of two Focke-Wulfs and their pilots. In March II/JG 1 had trained in Abbeville on II/JG 26's hand-me-down FW 190A-1s; these were the first victories gained by the Gruppe in their new fighter.

Lt. Erich Burkert reported to the Geschwader and was assigned to the 7th Staffel. His previous unit is unknown.

20 June

The Geschwader's morning patrols failed to make contact. Circus No. 193 targeted Le Havre, and its associated fighter sweeps down the western coast of the Pas de Calais brought the Second Gruppe up from Abbeville at 1506. The Gruppe made contact with a No. 10 Group wing east of Boulogne, and shot down five Spitfires; one Focke-Wulf crash-landed on Abbeville with engine damage. I/JG 2 also engaged the Spitfires, but did not fare as well. It also claimed five Spitfires, but lost one Bf 109F-4 near St. Omer and two FW 190A-2s in unstated locations; all three pilots were killed.

21 June

This was a very disappointing day for the Geschwader pilots. Several RAF formations came far inland – one crossed Brussels, and another circled



Uffz. Peter Crump, shortly after joining the 5th Staffel in June. (*Crump*)

Wevelghem – but no attacks were ordered. The First Gruppe had the only encounter with reportable results; a 2nd Staffel pilot shot down a Spitfire off Gravelines, and a Gruppe Focke-Wulf belly-landed on Calais-Marck with engine damage.

22 June

In late morning several fighter formations were vectored to Ostend at high altitude to intercept an approaching RAF formation. This proved to be a Rodeo that turned west at Ostend and withdrew after passing Dunkirk. The First and Third Gruppen made contact just off the coast. Hptm. Priller, flying at 33,000 feet, near the FW 190s' operational ceiling, caught a No. 64 Sqd. Spitfire eighteen miles north of Gravelines and claimed it, but it

reached England. One of his men was hit and bailed out over Calais-Marck without injury. A First Gruppe Focke-Wulf was shot down by a Spitfire and crashed near Millebruegge; its pilot also survived without injury.

Lt. Arndt Flock joined the Geschwader direct from Jagdfliegerschule 5 and was assigned to the Jabostaffel.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 20–22 June 1942

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
6/20/42	Hptm.	Müncheberg	II CO	82	Spitfire	S of Ardres	3:44 PM	118+501 Sqd	yes
6/20/42	Hptm.	Müncheberg	II CO	83	Spitfire	E of Boulogne	3:47 PM	118+501 Sqd	yes
6/20/42	Oblt.	Ebersberger	4 CO	24	Spitfire	Calais	3:48 PM	118+501 Sqd	yes
6/20/42	Uffz.	Birke	4	2	Spitfire	Calais-Marck	3:56 PM	118+501 Sqd	yes
6/20/42	Oblt.	Galland W-F.	5 CO	11	Spitfire	Guines	3:46 PM	118+501 Sqd	yes
6/21/42	Obfw.	Cwilinski	2	2	Spitfire	N of Gravelines	6:12 PM		yes
6/22/42	Hptm.	Priller	III CO	74	Spitfire	30km N of Gravelines	12:10 PM	64 Sqd	unk

23 June

This was another frustrating day for the Geschwader pilots. The Jafü was pre-occupied with protecting German shipping in the Channel, and was unwilling to release its patrols to attack fighter sweeps that posed no direct threat. One First Gruppe FW 190A-1 aborted a landing at Arques owing to landing gear damage, and sustained more damage in the consequent belly-landing.

The pilots of III/JG 2 at Brest had such confidence in their new FW 190A-3s that after a late-afternoon engagement the Gruppe adjutant and his wingman trailed the withdrawing Spitfires back across the English coast, in violation of standing orders, and attacked them a second time. The wingman collided with his target and crashed; the other German pilot became disoriented and flew



The 4th Staffel flight line at Abbeville in June. FW 190A-2 "white 1" (W.Nr. 5207) was Addi Glunz's regular aircraft from May to July. (*E.C.P.A.*)

north, landing his undamaged fighter on the RAF airbase at Pembrey. Mock combats with a Spitfire Vb were quickly arranged by the Air Fighting Development Unit and proved that the German fighter was superior in all flight parameters except turning radius. The seemingly magical ability of the Focke-Wulf fighter to disappear in the blink of an eye was attributable primarily to its well-balanced aileron controls, which gave the aircraft the highest rate of roll of any World War II fighter, Allied or Axis. The FW 190 was found to be 25 to 30 mph faster than the Spitfire Vb at all altitudes up to 25,000 feet. One data compilation lists the FW 190A-3's maximum speed with one-minute override boost as 418 mph at 21,000 feet. Its initial rate of climb was 2,830 feet per minute; its time to climb to 26,250 feet, twelve minutes; and its service ceiling, 34,775 feet.

As Fighter Command's pilots had been claiming for some time, Focke-Wulfs flying above Spitfire Vs could attack them at will, and were essentially invulnerable to reprisal – they could both out-climb and out-dive the British fighter, and their rapid rate of roll provided them with an infallible escape maneuver, given enough altitude. A quick, violent split-S would leave a pursuing Spitfire hundreds of yards behind, and usually flying in the wrong direction. The main recommendation that the experts of the AFDU had for the combat pilots did nothing to boost their offensive spirit. The Spitfire pilots were instructed to draw the Germans as close to England as possible and then circle until the Focke-Wulfs ran low on fuel and were forced to break off contact.

24–25 June

The RAF was strangely inactive, despite good weather. The Geschwader flew its routine patrols. One Second Gruppe FW 190A-2 sustained damage when it aborted a landing on Abbeville. It had been on a combat mission, possibly a reconnaissance flight to England.

Obfw. Friedrich Wagner reported to the Geschwader from instructor duty



The 4th Staffel's "white 14" (W.Nr. 015), a long-serving FW 190A-1 that was retrofitted with cooling slots behind the cowlings – Abbeville, June. (E.C.P.A.)

and was assigned to the Jabostaffel, which was training at Le Bourget in its new bomb-carrying FW 190As.

26 June

Fighter Command Spitfires swept the west coast of the Pas de Calais to screen a Circus being flown farther west. The Jafü, concerned that German ships passing through the Dover Straits had adequate protection if needed, called the German patrols away from the Allied fighters.

28 June

Fw. Addi Glunz was assigned the evening reconnaissance flight to England, and he and his wingman saw the Geschwader's only action. They were intercepted by two No. 611 Sqd. Spitfires while crossing Beachy Head at high altitude, and claimed both. One Spitfire was in fact shot down; its injured pilot bailed out.

29 June

Circus No. 195, a raid on Hazebrouck by twelve Bostons, was the first direct attack on the Pas de Calais in some time. It brought all three Gruppen into the air at 1632. The Second Gruppe was held back and did not make contact. The First Gruppe attacked the beehive off Coxyde at 1643. Maintaining contact above the coastline for several minutes, the Gruppe downed three Spitfires from the North Weald Wing, but lost the 2nd Staffel's Lt. Georg Greffenius, who was seen to be shot into the sea by a Spitfire. The Third Gruppe caught the withdrawing Allied force over the Channel, and downed two Spitfires from the Close Escort Hornchurch Wing without loss.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 28–29 June 1942

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
6/28/42	Uffz.	Birke	4	3	Spitfire	SE of Hastings	9:15 PM	611 Sqd	unk
6/28/42	Fw.	Glunz	4	18	Spitfire	Hastings	9:16 PM	611 Sqd	yes

6/29/42	Uffz.	Christof	1	4	Spitfire	W of Gravelines	4:45 PM	222+332 Sqd	unk
6/29/42	Obfw.	Kirstein	2 CO	2	Spitfire	N of Coxyde	4:43 PM	222+332 Sqd	yes
6/29/42	Oblt.	Zink	2	21	Spitfire	15km NNW of Dunkirk	4:48 PM	222+332 Sqd	yes
6/29/42	Ogfr.	Hager V.	7	2	Spitfire	unknown	4:50 AM	64+350 Sqd	yes
6/29/42	Lt.	Galland P.	8	12	Spitfire	unknown	4:55 PM	64+350 Sqd	yes

JG 26 Casualties: June 1942

Date	Rank	Name	Cas	Unit	Aircraft	WNr	Mkgs	Place	Time	Cause
6/2/42	Fw.	Schieffer, Karl	KIA	5	FW 190A-2	2117	bk 7	W of Berck sur Mer	11:00 AM	Spitfire
6/3/42	Lt.	Segler, Ulrich	KIFA	9	FW 190A-2	343	yl 6	E of Ypres	3:50 PM	crashed
6/6/42	Fw.	Görtz, Otto	KIA	10(J)	Bf 109F-4/R1	8532	wh 2+ bomb	S of Bournemouth		flak
6/7/42	Lt.	Helmholz, Gottfried	KIFA	2	FW 190A-2	2119		Arques a/f		crashed
6/8/42	Lt.	Hilgendorff, Viktor	WIA	Ge St	FW 190A-2	453	bk VH-	near Arques a/f	1:45 PM	Spitfire
6/9/42	Oblt.	Ragotzi, Hans	KIA	10(J)	Bf 109F-4/R1	8344	wh 7+ bomb	50 km W of Somme Est	9:20 PM	Spitfire
6/29/42	Lt.	Greffenius, Georg	KIA	2	FW 190A-1	023	bk 8	N of Dunkirk		Spitfire

30 June

Oblt. Otto Behrens had recovered from his March injuries and was ready to resume active command of the 6th Staffel. It was decided that his talents could better be used at Rechlin, and he was transferred to the Luftwaffe test center. He was succeeded as Staffel Kapitän by the Second Gruppe adjutant, Oblt. Theo Lindemann.

Lt. Peter Reischer and Oblt. Günther Kelch reported to the Geschwader from the Ergänzungsjagdgruppe West; both were assigned to the 7th Staffel. Kelch had won the Iron Cross Second Class in 1940 as an artilleryman.

1 July

A draft of replacement pilots arrived from the Ergänzungsjagdgruppe West and were parceled out to the Staffeln. Uffz. Waldemar Söffing was assigned to the 1st Staffel; Uffz. Heinrich Schild, to the 2nd; Ogfr. Heinz Gomann, to the 5th; Fw. Xaver Ellenrieder, to the 7th; and Ogfr. Richard Wittmann, to the Jabostaffel.

3 July

Routine patrols and Alarmstarts were flown without contacting the RAF. Ogfr. Gomann and Fw. Ellenrieder made their first training flights in their new units.

5/JG 2 transferred from Beaumont-le-Roger to Ligescourt, a former III/JG 26 base near Crécy, where it joined another JG 2 Staffel. It may be assumed that they were subordinated to II/JG 26 in nearby Abbeville. 5/JG 2 appears to have made a specialty of reconnaissance missions; one pilot made five flights to the English coast over the next two weeks.

The other JG 2 Staffel was 11(Höhen)/JG 2, which was the first unit to be equipped with a new Messerschmitt fighter, the Bf 109G-1. Although the FW 190 was superior to the Bf 109 in most combat parameters, the Messerschmitt fighter remained numerically predominant in the Jagdwaffe, and its development had continued. The Bf 109G-1 had begun coming off the Augsburg



The 6th Staffel takes in some sun while at readiness at Abbeville in July. From left: Lt. Rudolf Leuschel (KIA 25 Feb 44), Gefr. Friedrich Kaiser (KIA 16 May 43), Uffz. Heinz Budde (POW 20 Jan 43), Uffz. Wilhelm Mayer (KIA 4 Jan 45), Uffz. Heinz Marquardt (POW 20 Jan 43), Oblt. Walter Weiss (KIA 20 Dec 44), Oblt. Robert Matoni, Obfw. Kurt Kruska (KIA 9 Apr 43). (*Molge*)

production lines in the spring. It was intended for high-altitude service, and possessed a rudimentary pressurized cabin. 1/JG 2 was re-equipped in late May, and was then redesignated as a specialized high-altitude Staffel, 11(Höhen)/JG 2. It was commanded by Oblt. Rudi Pflanz, one of the Richthofen Geschwader's most successful pilots. His Staffel was transferred to Ligescourt for the summer "Circus season".

4-6 July

Routine patrols and Alarmstarts were flown, but the Allied formations over the Channel did not cross the coast and they were not engaged. Uncertain weather gave Fighter Command an excuse to reduce its offensive operations. Its position of qualitative inferiority had thoroughly demoralized all levels of the command, from top to bottom. The Royal Air Force leadership, apparently lulled into complacency by its own constant claims of aerial success, was slow to react to the menace posed by the FW 190. The salvation of Fighter Command would prove to be the Spitfire IX, which featured a new engine from Rolls-Royce, the Merlin 61, mounted in the proven Spitfire V airframe. The first squadron to get the Spitfire IX was Hornchurch's No. 64, which received its first examples on the 6th.

7 July

Schwärme of Geschwader Focke-Wulfs spent the day shepherding a convoy through the Channel. RAF aircraft were contacted, but no serious encounters resulted.

8 July

In mid-afternoon a large force of fighters was plotted climbing steeply as it approached Calais. Units of the Geschwader were scrambled. The Allied force did not penetrate inland, but split and flew west and east along the coast; the German fighters were not ordered to attack it.

10 July

10(Jabo)/JG 26 returned to Caen-Carpiquet and prepared to resume operations. Its new FW 190A-2/U3s and FW 190A-3/U3s could carry a single 500 kg (1100 lb) bomb under the fuselage and four 110 lb bombs under the wings, more than doubling the bomb load of its old Bf 109Fs. The Focke-Wulf fighter would prove to be well suited to the ground attack role because of its air-cooled engine and its robust construction.

12 July

Fighter Command dispatched Rodeos to the Pas de Calais early and often, and formations from the First and Second Gruppen were airborne from 0615 to 2030, under the direction of their own Gruppe command posts. The controllers were at first content to have the fighters patrol their fixed zones, until Drucat was surprised at 1249 by the appearance of twelve Bostons over the field. The bombers, half of which were manned by American 8th Air Force crews, dropped their loads from below a cloud cover at 8,000 feet. The bombs fell north of the field; the bombers then escaped with no damage other than a few flak holes. The escorting Spitfires then dropped to ground level and strafed the airfield, killing one mechanic and injuring five others. The Gruppe's airborne fighters failed to reach either the bombers or their escorts; in fact, during the entire day no Abbeville fighter contacted enemy aircraft. The St. Omer command post had somewhat better success for the day, directing four First Gruppe patrols to the point of contact. Only one of these pilots reported a success. Obfw. Leibold of the First Gruppe Stabsschwarm claimed a Mosquito, a first for the Geschwader; its unit has not been traced.

Hptm. Karl Plunser transferred out of the Geschwader. His position as leader of 10(Jabo)/JG 26 was assumed on an interim basis by Oblt. Schröfter.

13 July

The Jafü 2 command post directed Geschwader operations today, with somewhat better results than those obtained by the Gruppen on the previous day. The morning's offshore Rodeos were parried by the Germans' inland patrols. Fighter Command's major effort came in early afternoon. Twelve Bostons bombed the Boulogne rail yards, supported by sweeps of Abbeville by the Biggin Hill, Kenley and Tangmere Wings. Part of the Second Gruppe was up and waiting. The 4th Staffel's Obfw. Helmut Ufer was hit by a No. 616 Sqd Spitfire and crashed in his aircraft southwest of Abbeville, but the Gruppe claimed three Spitfires in a running fight that continued nearly to the English coast.

In the evening several Staffeln flew their aircraft to dispersal airfields for the night. It is known from the pilots' logbooks that the 2nd Staffel moved from Arques to Wizernes, and the 6th moved from Drucat to Ligescourt. Adolf Hitler had a fear of Allied commando raids, and every time German intelligence predicted a forthcoming raid Luftflotte 3 would be ordered to disperse its aircraft at night to reduce their vulnerability to sabotage and surprise attacks. This summer the procedure was repeated nightly until mid-September.

14 July

Routine patrols and Alarmstarts were flown, without contact.

15 July

Fighter Command ordered a Ramrod, a mission code that implied an intent to actually do damage to ground targets. No bombers were included on the mission; fifteen Spitfire squadrons were to strafe ground installations along the French beaches from Le Touquet past Dieppe to St. Valéry. Again today the Geschwader was controlled from the Gruppe command posts, which kept the German fighters away from the Spitfires except for a few chance engagements, during one of which a Second Gruppe Focke-Wulf was slightly damaged. Light flak hit the Spitfire of the Hornchurch wing commander, Paddy Finucane, who ditched his fighter in the Channel off Le Touquet. It sank immediately, and Finucane went down with it, but the futile British rescue effort led to the day's only major encounters. No. 402 Squadron volunteered to make a search, took off from Redhill in pairs and fours, and raced at sea level to Le Touquet, where one rescue launch was already on fire after being strafed by Hptm. Priller's Third Gruppe. After a vicious dogfight one Spitfire pilot bailed out and was rescued by a second launch; another pilot crash-landed on Manston. The Canadian pilots claimed 1-0-2 Focke-Wulfs, but none in fact was lost or damaged. The downed Spitfire was undoubtedly the victim of Hptm. Priller, although his logbook strangely locates this combat as northeast of Dover. Fw. Xaver Ellenrieder flew on this mission, and received credit for his first combat sortie – a stark introduction to life on the Kanalfront.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 12–15 July 1942

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
7/12/42	Obfw.	Leibold	I St	11	Mosquito	Licques	2:35 PM		yes
7/13/42		II. Stab	II St	3	Spitfire	S of Berck sur Mer	2:55 PM	602 Sqd	yes
7/13/42	Obfw.	Philipp	4	15	Spitfire	mid-Channel	3:10 PM	401 Sqd	yes
7/13/42		6. Staffel	6	3	Spitfire	S of Berck sur Mer	2:55 PM	602 Sqd	yes
7/15/42	Hptm.	Priller	III CO	75	Spitfire	8km NE of Dover	3:38 PM	402 Sqd	yes

18 July

The daily reconnaissance mission to southern England was flown this morning by two FW 190s from 5/JG 2, which was now based at Ligescourt under II/JG 26. They were followed back from England by F/L Tony Gaze, a bold Australian pilot from No. 616 Squadron, who shot down one of the Focke-Wulfs off Le Touquet. Fw. Glunz took part in the subsequent unsuccessful sea search. The day was otherwise quiet. Ogfr. Heinz Gomann flew an uneventful convoy escort, a typical first mission for a new pilot.

Oblt. Hans Geburtig was appointed Kapitän of the Jabostaffel.

19 July

Bomber Command's No. 2 Group had been ordered to send pairs of Bostons on unescorted low-level bombing missions to large targets such as power stations. These hazardous undertakings were little publicized, and were never given a catchy code name such as "Ramrod". They were necessitated by the impotence of Fighter Command, which could no longer risk sending its Spitfires even as far inland as Lille. The Spitfire wings would escort the bombers as far as the coast,

and then fly sweeps along the shore, leaving the bombers to complete their missions on their own. The Gruppe controllers found it difficult to follow the RAF formations' numerous splits and changes of direction. Twenty Bostons crossed the French coast today on low-level missions. None was intercepted. A First Gruppe formation attacked the North Weald Wing out of the low-lying clouds off Dunkirk, but did no damage. The 1st Staffel's Fw. Erich Schick was shot down in a head-on attack by two No. 71 (Eagle) Squadron pilots who had been up on a training flight from their Debden base and had on their own initiative attached themselves to the North Weald Wing to fly the mission – Fighter Command as a whole was in a temporary funk, but many of its pilots remained eager for action.

The Second Gruppe controller at Abbeville ordered up a full strength mission at 1519. The logbooks of four mission pilots – Fw. Glunz of the 4th Staffel, Uffz. Crump and Ogfr. Gomann of the 5th, and Uffz. Mayer of the 6th – have been preserved. Gomann was the only pilot of the four to come into contact with Spitfires and receive credit for a combat sortie (his first), excellent evidence for the role of luck – and low-lying clouds – in the game of three-dimensional chess being played over the Pas de Calais. The Gruppe claimed no victories and suffered no losses during the day.

11(Höhen)/JG 2 did sustain a loss, its first. A pilot belly-landed his fighter on Ligescourt after experiencing a mechanical failure on a combat mission, damaging it sufficiently that it was written off.

20 July

Routine patrols and Alarmstarts were flown. The Allied formations did not cross the coast, and were not engaged.

21 July

The Second Gruppe said farewell to its popular Kommandeur, Hptm. Joachim Müncheberg. The uniquely talented twenty-three-year-old pilot was being sent to the Eastern Front, as an “apprentice Kommodore”, as he casually put it. His actual assignment was an indication of the high esteem in which he was held in the Luftwaffe. He was under orders to tour all of the Jagdgeschwader in the east as a novel form of training before taking up a post as a Geschwader Kommodore. Müncheberg was the highest-scoring pilot in JG 26 at the time he left, with eighty-three victories. He was to score another fifty-two before losing his life in North Africa while Kommodore of JG 77. Hptm. Conny Meyer replaced him as Second Gruppe Kommandeur.

23 July

The highlight of an otherwise monotonous day was an expansion of the nightly dispersal program, which continued for the rest of the summer. Known dispersal bases were: 1st and 3rd Staffeln: Vitry-en-Artois; 2nd Staffel: Merville; 4th Staffel: Amiens, later Poix; 5th Staffel: Cambrai-Epinoy; 6th Staffel: Cambrai-Süd; 7th Staffel: Lille-Süd. These transfer flights were well-liked by the Second Gruppe pilots, because there was a school for Luftnachrichtenhelferinnen (Luftwaffe airwomen) in Cambrai. Jafü 2 relocated permanently at around this time, moving inland from Le Touquet to St. Pol-Brias.



6th Staffel pilots relax with a game of chess while at readiness. From left: Oblt. Matoni, Obfw. Kruska, Oblt. Weiss. (*Molge*)

24 July

There was no RAF activity today, and the Geschwader pilots spent their time on routine duties. The 2nd Staffel's Fw. Dietze flew the evening reconnaissance mission to southern England. He was given credit for a combat sortie, which implies that his Rotte had succeeded in crossing the English coast. The 6th Staffel's Uffz. Mayer flew an uneventful reception flight to escort returning recon or Jabo aircraft back to base.

25 July

Routine patrols and Alarmstarts were flown. Only one 9th Staffel Schwarm encountered enemy aircraft. At 1414 the St. Omer controller ordered Oblt. Ruppert and his men up from Wevelghem to investigate a report of RAF aircraft circling six miles northeast of Ostend. These proved to be an ASR Defiant escorted by two Spitfires, which were promptly attacked by the Focke-Wulfs. Ruppert's pilots claimed all three aircraft, but one Spitfire evaded the German fighters and reached England.

26 July

The St. Omer and Abbeville controllers spent the morning directing defensive patrols over an area ranging from Ostend to Dieppe. Shortly after 1300 large formations were reported approaching Boulogne. The three JG 26 Gruppen and the two JG 2 Staffeln at Ligescourt were all ordered to take off. The Allied force was a three-Wing Rodeo headed for Abbeville-Drucat and St. Omer. Six Spitfires of the American 31st Fighter Group (31st FG) flew with the Biggin Hill Wing on the US Eighth Air Force's first fighter mission. After the Biggin Hill Wing had turned back at St. Omer it was attacked by the First Gruppe, following which the executive officer of the 31st FG parachuted down to be

taken prisoner. Some pilots of the Gruppe chased a formation of Spitfires over Calais; the RAF fighters suddenly wheeled around and attacked, and the Focke-Wulf of Obfw. Erwin Leibold, Hptm. Seifert's wingman, exploded. Leibold was thrown clear, and his parachute opened, but he landed in the Channel and was not found. The 1st Staffel's Oblt. Josef Haiböck was injured in this battle, but his FW 190 was only slightly damaged, and he was able to land back on Arques. The Spitfire pilots were either from No. 72 Squadron, withdrawing from St. Omer, or the Northolt Wing, lying in wait over Calais as the Rodeo's rear cover.

The Tangmere Wing overflew Abbeville-Drucat and then withdrew to the west. The same route was apparently followed by Biggin Hill's No. 401 Squadron, which bore the brunt of the Second Gruppe's main attack. Three Spitfires were claimed off Boulogne. Only one claim was confirmed, and only one aircraft from No. 401 Squadron was, in fact, lost.

Two Second Gruppe Schwärme were ordered north to attack some Spitfires that were orbiting off of Calais. The scratch unit contained only NCO pilots, and was led by an experienced Oberfeldwebel, Wilhelm Philipp. Uffz. Peter Crump found himself flying as Philipp's wingman, although the two men belonged to different Staffeln. Philipp led the formation to the west of the Spitfires' reported position, and when halfway across the Channel attacked out of the afternoon sun. Their opponents, Biggin Hill's No. 72 Squadron, were a very experienced lot, but were caught at a disadvantage, and lost one wingman to Philipp's bounce. Crump thought that two more Spitfires went down, but both made crash-landings in England. Peter Crump admits that he saw very little of the battle; it was all he could do to stay on Philipp's wing. He had at last taken part in his first combat mission, six long weeks after being placed on the 5th Staffel's duty roster. Most important, he had survived it.

A 5/JG 2 Schwarm from Ligescourt followed the withdrawing Spitfires half-way across the Channel without attacking. They were seen by a pair of No. 91 Squadron pilots who were on an area patrol. The Spitfires made a daring attack from directly below and shot down the Schwarmführer, who bailed out and was quickly picked up by an RAF rescue launch. Two of the remaining Focke-Wulfs were claimed damaged; one of these had to make a forced landing back on Ligescourt.

11(Höhen)/JG 2 was also airborne at this time, and Oblt. Rudi Pflanz claimed the Staffel's first two victories. Unfortunately, his opponents cannot be identified; none of the available Allied records mentions an encounter with Bf 109s.

The Third Gruppe failed to make contact with the Rodeo. Hptm. Priller took off at the next opportunity and succeeded in driving off a squadron of Spitfires that were menacing a rescue boat north of Calais, but made no claims. The Geschwader pilots spent the rest of the day guarding shipping and escorting the rescue launches.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 25–26 July 1942

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
7/25/42	Uffz.	Dörre	9	1	Spitfire	NW Dunkirk	2:28 PM	416 Sqd	yes
7/25/42	Uffz.	Börner	9	1	Defiant	N Dunkirk	2:30 PM	277 Sqd	yes
7/25/42	Oblt.	Ruppert K.	9 CO	15	Spitfire	W Dunkirk	2:31 PM	416 Sqd	yes
7/26/42	Lt.	Rahardt	2	2	Spitfire	10km S of Calais		31 FG	yes
7/26/42	Obfw.	Philipp	4	16	Spitfire	English Coast	1:47 PM	72 Sqd	yes
7/26/42	Uffz.	Vogt	6	6	Spitfire	W of Le Touquet	1:28 PM	401 Sqd	unk
7/26/42	Obfw.	Meyer W.	6	14	Spitfire	W of Boulogne	1:30 PM	401 Sqd	unk
7/26/42	Obfw.	Meyer W.	6	15	Spitfire	S of Cap Gris Nez	1:38 PM	401 Sqd	yes

27 July

10(Jabo)/JG 26 transferred from Caen-Carpiquet to Evreux.

28 July

The Tangmere Wing flew two Rodeos during the afternoon. The three Gruppen were scrambled, but failed to make contact. The second Rodeo penetrated as far as St. Omer; one Australian pilot noted in his logbook that he was "chased home by 50+ Huns", but the Focke-Wulfs were unable to close to firing range, and no combat resulted.

Hornchurch's No. 64 Squadron returned to operations on its new Spitfire IXs.

29 July

Routine patrols and Alarmstarts were carried out, but they failed to contact the RAF, even though Spitfires penetrated eleven miles inland from Ostend. There is evidence in the radio intercepts of confusion on the part of the Jafü.

30 July

This was a busy day for the Geschwader, whose pilots claimed thirteen Allied fighters. Fighter Command lost at least twelve Spitfires and two Hurricanes. Unfortunately the times of most of the German claims are unknown, as are the locations of several, so it is impossible to put together a complete picture of the day's combats. Shortly after noon the Jafü scrambled several units to intercept a formation of Allied aircraft reported north of St. Omer, flying southwest. This was Circus No. 200, headed for Abbeville-Drucat. The formation was met by flights from the First and Second Gruppen. The bombing made no impression on the Germans, and the Bostons may have missed Abbeville. A mid-afternoon sweep brought five Luftwaffe formations into the air; contact was made by the Second Gruppe, but details are unknown.

Beginning at 1816 five fighter formations were ordered into the air to counter RAF activity over Dungeness and the Channel. These formations were from the three JG 26 Gruppen; 11(Höhen)/JG 2; and a new high-altitude Staffel, 11(Höhen)/JG 26. Most documents give 8 August as the date of formation of this Staffel, but it was in action today in its Bf 109G-1s. 11(Höhen)/JG 26 was formed around a nucleus from the First Gruppe, to which it was subordinated. The Staffel's first Kapitän was Oblt. Johannes Schmidt, who brought several experienced pilots with him from I/JG 26, including one of the Gruppe's best NCOs, Fw. Emil Babenz. The Staffel was based on a small airfield at Norrent-Fontes, between St. Omer and Béthune. It was intended that the two Messerschmitt Staffeln would specialize in two types of mission: high-altitude interception and cover for the altitude-limited Focke-Wulfs.

The RAF formations circled off Cap Gris Nez, giving the Jafü ample time to assemble its forces. The main Allied formation was engaged on a Ramrod to St. Omer-Wizernes, and comprised some Hurribombers escorted by the Hornchurch Wing. It was met by Hptm. Priller and his Third Gruppe as it crossed the coast. Priller claimed a Spitfire at this time, but his claim was rejected. Three of the Third Gruppe's claims were confirmed, but details are lacking, and it is possible that the downed fighters were from the sweeps that were taking place at the same time. The Ramrod force was hit next by the First Gruppe, right over Wizernes. Two Hurricanes were shot down, one by Oblt. Hermichen. The First Gruppe claimed six Spitfires. Before reaching England the Hornchurch

Wing lost six Spitfire Vs and their pilots. No. 64 Squadron claimed several FW 190s and lost none of its Spitfire IXs. The 2nd Staffel's Oblt. Herbert Heck was shot down by Spitfires, probably in this combat, and crashed near Samer in his plane.

Several Rodeos were flown in support of the St. Omer attack. The Tangmere Wing was led into a trap off Boulogne by an inexperienced squadron leader, and was attacked by “80+ 190s and 109s” – the Second Gruppe and the two Höhenstaffeln. Oblt. Schmidt shot down a No. 616 Sqd. Spitfire, but one of his Staffel's aircraft was hit; its pilot had to bail out over Samer. Oblt. Pflanz and a member of his Staffel also claimed Spitfires; one of Pflanz's men wrecked his Bf 109G-1 in a crash-landing on Audembert. The Tangmere Wing lost six Spitfire Vs, but two of its pilots were rescued from the Channel.

During the day the new Kapitän of the Jabostaffel, Oblt. Hans-Joachim Geburtig, led an attack on ships in Littlehampton harbor. Geburtig's Focke-Wulf was hit by anti-aircraft fire from a collier; he ditched his aircraft two miles off the English coast, but was not found. He was succeeded as Staffel Kapitän by Oblt. Paul Keller.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 30 July 1942

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
7/30/42	Hptm.	Seifert	I CO	37	Spitfire	Boulogne			yes
7/30/42	Hptm.	Seifert	I CO	38	Spitfire	near Dungeness			unk
7/30/42	Hptm.	Seifert	I CO	39	Spitfire	NW of St. Omer			yes
7/30/42	Oblt.	Zink	2 CO	22	Spitfire	15km NW of Boulogne			yes
7/30/42	Fw.	Babenz	3	18	Spitfire	near Watten			yes
7/30/42	Obfw.	Eichinger	3	2	Spitfire	4km off St. Omer			yes
7/30/42	Oblt.	Hermichen	3 CO	15	Hurricane	Wizernes a/f		174 Sqd	yes
7/30/42	Obfw.	Gerhardt W.	5	11	Spitfire	Channel Narrows	7:32 PM	616 Sqd	yes
7/30/42	Hptm.	Priller	III CO		Spitfire	Gravelines	7:00 PM		no
7/30/42	Lt.	Galland P.	8	13	Spitfire	unknown			unk
7/30/42	Lt.	Galland P.	8	14	Spitfire	unknown			unk
7/30/42	Oblt.	Borris	8 CO	20	Spitfire	unknown	7:20 PM		yes
7/30/42	Oblt.	Schmidt J.	11(H)CO	10	Spitfire	15km W of Boulogne		616 Sqd	yes

31 July

Uffz. Crump took part in the morning recon flight to England and received credit for his second combat sortie. RAF air activity near Dieppe brought several Geschwader patrols into the air, but no contact was made. At 1455 the Second Gruppe scrambled from Abbeville as a dozen Bostons headed up the Somme River directly for Drucat. The last of the Focke-Wulfs took off as bombs were bursting on the field; one Stabskompanie armorer was killed. The bombers, the striking force of Circus No. 201, wheeled to withdraw over the Somme Estuary. The Second Gruppe caught up with the North Weald Wing, flying escort cover, and punished it severely in attacks that persisted all the way to Dungeness. No. 121 (Eagle) Squadron lost one pilot, and its leader returned with injuries. The inexperienced Norwegian pilots of No. 332 Sqd. lost four pilots, and its squadron leader also returned with wounds. One Second Gruppe FW 190 crash-landed on Amiens-Glisy after the battle, and Uffz. Gerhard Birke was injured, but brought his slightly-damaged airplane back to Abbeville. The Gruppe claimed twelve Spitfires; Uffz. Mayer's claim was not filed, and three were not confirmed. The Eagles claimed 4-1-0 Bf 109s and 2-0-0 FW 190s. The Bf 109s were from the Höhenstaffeln, and two aircraft from 11(Höhen)/JG 2



A Focke-Wulf of the Third Gruppe Stab returns to Wevelghem after a summer mission. (*Vanackere*)

were in fact lost. One pilot crash-landed his Messerschmitt on the field at Etaples, where it burned out. The other, the Staffel Kapitän and Knight's Cross winner Rudi Pflanz, failed to return.

The First Gruppe scrambled from St. Omer and reached the main force west of the Somme Estuary. They made what an Australian pilot described as a "perfect bounce" on the Biggin Hill Wing, which was tied to the bombers as close escort. Three pilots from No. 133 (Eagle) Squadron went down, and a fourth made it back to England with injuries that put him out of the war. The First Gruppe filed four claims, and suffered no losses.

The Third Gruppe was held on the ground until 1520 and missed the battle. Schwärme from the Second Gruppe spent the evening searching for Pflanz off Berck; only a rubber dinghy was found.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 31 July 1942

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
7/31/42	Uffz.	Klems	I St	1	Spitfire	20km W of Etaples		133 Sqd	yes
7/31/42	Hptm.	Seifert	I CO	40	Spitfire	20km W of Berck sur Mer		133 Sqd	yes
7/31/42	Lt.	Uiberacker	G. 1	6	Tomahawk	5km W of Somme Estuary		133 Sqd	yes
7/31/42	Oblt.	Zink	2 CO	23	Spitfire	15km W of Authie Estuary		133 Sqd	yes
7/31/42	Hptm.	Meyer K-H.	II CO	8	Spitfire	W of Somme Estuary	3:03 PM	121+332 Sqd	yes
7/31/42	Fw.	Glunz	4	19	Spitfire	W of Berck sur Mer	3:01 PM	121+332 Sqd	yes
7/31/42	Uffz.	Birke	4	4	Spitfire	W of Berck sur Mer	3:04 PM	121+332 Sqd	yes
7/31/42	Fw.	Glunz	4	20	Spitfire	W of Berck sur Mer	3:08 PM	121+332 Sqd	unk
7/31/42	Obfw.	Philipp	4	17	Spitfire	W of Berck sur Mer	3:13 PM	121+332 Sqd	yes
7/31/42	Lt.	Cadenbach	4	1	Spitfire	W of Berck sur Mer	3:17 PM	121+332 Sqd	yes
7/31/42	Obfw.	Bierwirth	5	5	Spitfire	Somme Estuary	3:00 PM	121+332 Sqd	yes
7/31/42	Oblt.	Galland W-F.	5 CO	12	Spitfire	WNW of Somme Estuary	3:07 PM	121+332 Sqd	yes
7/31/42	Oblt.	Galland W-F.	5 CO	13	Spitfire	WNW of Somme Estuary	3:08 PM	121+332 Sqd	yes
7/31/42	Obfw.	Gerhardt W.	5	13	Spitfire	SW of Dungeness	3:12 PM	121+332 Sqd	unk
7/31/42	Obfw.	Gerhardt W.	5	12	Spitfire	W of Dungeness	3:23 PM	121+332 Sqd	unk
7/31/42	Uffz.	Mayer	6		Spitfire	mid-Channel	3:20 PM	121+332 Sqd	no

JG 26 Casualties: July 1942

Date	Rank	Name	Cas	Unit	Aircraft	WNr	Mkgs	Place	Time	Cause
7/13/42	Obfw.	Ufer, Helmut	KIA	4	FW 190A-1	036	wh 5	SW of Abbeville		Spitfire
7/19/42	Fw.	Schick, Erich	KIA	1	FW 190A-2	5336		N of Dunkirk		Spitfire
7/26/42	Obfw.	Leibold, Erwin	KIA	1 St	FW 190A-2	5228		off Arques		Spitfire
7/26/42	Oblt.	Haiböck, Josef	WIA	1 CO	FW 190A-3			N of Calais		Spitfire
7/30/42	Oblt.	Heck, Herbert	KIA	2	FW 190A-2	5303		Boulogne		Spitfire
7/30/42	Oblt.	Geburtig, Hans-Joachim	POW	10(J)CO	FW 190A-3/U3	7003	bk 1+ <bomb	off Littlehampton		ship flak
7/31/42	Uffz.	Birke, Gerhard	WIA	4	FW 190A-2	5411	wh 5	20km SW of Berck		Spitfire

1 August

Routine patrols and Alarmstarts were carried out; no attacks were ordered, although several RAF formations flew inland, and bombers were reported southeast of Bruges.

A Jabostaffel Rotte consisting of Obfw. Knobeloch and his wingman Oblt. Arnd Flock was intercepted by No. 412 Sqd. Spitfires after bombing Newhaven, and Flock was shot down and lost.

3 August

There was little aerial activity. The 7th Staffel's Xaver Ellenrieder took off at 1840 after a low-level attack force was reported, but did not locate the raiders.

4 August

Routine patrols were carried out. RAF aircraft apparently did not cross the coast. The 6th Staffel's Uffz. Mayer flew an uneventful sea search; the 7th Staffel's Fw. Ellenrieder was ordered up to shoot down some loose barrage balloons that were crossing the Pas de Calais.

5 August

Routine patrols and Alarmstarts were flown. There was considerable air activity over the Channel, but the RAF apparently did not cross the French coast.

Fw. Willi Mackenstedt left the hospital after recovering from his April injury, and was ordered to the Ergänzungsjagdgruppe West for a tour as a ground instructor.

6 August

Routine patrols and Alarmstarts were flown. The 5th Staffel's Uffz. Crump and Ogfr. Gomann flew an escort mission for the catapult ship *Schwabenland* and were credited with a combat sortie. The 7th Staffel's Fw. Ellenrieder took off from Wevelghem for the evening recon mission, but had to break off early. The engine of one Third Gruppe FW 190 failed while taking off on a combat mission, and it collided with a second fighter which was destroyed.

7 August

Routine patrols and Alarmstarts were flown. Several pilots reported to the Geschwader from the Ergänzungsjagdgruppe West, and were assigned as

follows: First Gruppe: Uffz. Peter Ahrens, Obfw. Friedrich Lindelaub (a former Luftwaffe machinist); Second Gruppe: Uffz. Hans Rieder; Third Gruppe: Fw. Gerhard Corinth (an ex-civilian flight instructor); Jabostaffel: Uffz. Heinrich von Berg.

8 August

Routine patrols and Alarmstarts were flown. Uffz. Mayer's 6th Staffel Schwarm flew a reception escort for Jabos returning from Dungeness, and a later sea search; both were uneventful.

9 August

This was a day of much activity, and no combat. The entire Third Gruppe was scrambled at noon to oppose an RAF formation heading east over the Channel, and again at 1800 as RAF aircraft passed westbound over St. Omer. The Second Gruppe also made two Alarmstarts after aircraft were reported over the Somme Estuary. No attacks were ordered, and none of these flights made contact.

Ogfr. Gomann flew the evening recon mission. His was classed as a "Grossaufklärung", or large reconnaissance, and called for a flight along the English coast from Dover to Beachy Head.

10 August

This morning it was Uffz. Mayer's turn to fly the recon mission. His Rotte covered the English coastline from Deal to Dungeness.

10(Jabo)/JG 26 transferred to St. Omer-Wizernes, coming once more under the control of Jafü 2.

11 August

Routine patrols and Alarmstarts were flown; no contact was made. The 5th Staffel's Alfred Barthel was injured when his Focke-Wulf crashed after hitting an object while taking off from Epinoy.

12 August

Routine patrols and Alarmstarts were flown in response to heavy RAF activity over the Channel; no contact was made. Fw. Ellenrieder flew an uneventful convoy escort mission. Two 2nd Staffel Focke-Wulfs were forced to earth with engine problems. Fw. Paul Weczera was injured when his aircraft crashed near Ostend; Uffz. Hans Stoller was able to crash-land on Mardyck, suffering injuries.

13 August

A pair of Spitfires on a Rhubarb mission strafed Drucat at dawn, injuring one groundcrewman. Uffz. Crump was scrambled and caught up with them, but both Spitfires made it back to England after the ensuing combat. Fw. Glunz took off with the Second Gruppe to intercept a large RAF formation over the Somme Estuary. Contact was made, but neither side suffered any losses.

15 August

This was another day of patrols and Alarmstarts, with no enemy contact. Uffz. Crump and Ogfr. Gomann flew the evening recon mission, a Grossaufklärung along the English coast from Hastings to Dungeness.

16 August

There was little aerial activity; a few fruitless Alarmstarts were carried out.

17 August

Heavy activity in the Channel brought the First Gruppe up at 0917, under the control today of the Geschwader command post at Wizernes. Spitfires were contacted east of Boulogne, but neither side sustained any losses. The Second Gruppe, controlled from their own Gruppe command post, scrambled at 1558 on reports of enemy bombers approaching the airfield. The aircraft turned away. Several pilots of the Gruppe reported engaging Spitfires, but no losses were incurred. At 1830 the First and Third Gruppen were scrambled on reports of a third large RAF formation which crossed the Belgian coast west of Ostend, flying east. Again, contact was reported, but no claims or losses resulted.

At 1837 yet another large formation was reported, this time between Fécamp and Dieppe. Abbeville scrambled the Second Gruppe and ordered it to orbit the field. The Allied formation, Circus No. 204, contained twelve American B-17s, flying the VIII Bomber Command's first heavy bomber mission. Close escort was provided by Fighter Command's four Spitfire IX squadrons, flying as an *ad hoc* Wing. Rear support was afforded by the Biggin Hill and Tangmere Wings. The B-17s bombed the Rouen railroad yards and wheeled about to retrace their route back to the northeast. The Abbeville controller ordered the Second Gruppe to attack the Allied formation over the Channel. Nos. 401 and 402 Squadrons, on the right side of the escort screen, attacked the Focke-Wulfs and succeeded in keeping them away from the bombers, but lost two Spitfire IXs and their pilots; a third Spitfire crashed in England with a badly-injured pilot. The Gruppe's pilots misidentified the bombers as Stirlings, and were impressed by their close formation and heavy defensive fire. The Gruppe was recalled to base at 1908, and was credited with downing four Spitfires, while sustaining no losses. Earlier, JG 2 had lost one pilot over the bombers' target, Rouen; the Richthofen Geschwader claimed no victories.

The US Eighth Air Force, which would ultimately end the Luftwaffe's dominance of the skies over western Europe, was now committed to action. Weak in strength and lacking combat experience, the VIII Bomber Command's first raids barely crossed the coast, and were directed at airfields, railroad yards, and the few industrial targets unfortunate enough to be located within range of the B-17s' Spitfire escort. The air marshals of the RAF disagreed with the air doctrine of the Americans, who were planning the unescorted daylight bombing of German industrial targets. However, the British were perfectly willing to share with the Americans the task of harassing the Luftwaffe in the occupied countries.

18 August

Several patrols were flown in response to enemy activity over the Channel. The Biggin Hill Wing approached St. Omer on a mid-afternoon sweep, and the First Gruppe was scrambled. The Focke-Wulfs caught the Spitfires near Sangatte, and claimed two in a battle over the Channel. The 2nd Staffel lost Lt. Heinz Rahardt, who bailed out into the water but was not found.



Three pilots of the 4th Staffel at Abbeville: Lt. Dietrich Kehl (KIA 25 Feb 44), Fw. Adolf Glunz, and Lt. Günther Blömertz (WIA 24 Jun 43). (*Bundesarchiv-Bildarchiv*)

JG 26 Victory Claims: 17–18 August 1942

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
8/17/42	Lt.	Cadenbach	4	2	Spitfire	SW of Dieppe	6:53 PM	401+402 Sqd	yes
8/17/42	Obfw.	Philipp	4	18	Spitfire	W of Dieppe	7:06 PM	401+402 Sqd	yes
8/17/42	Lt.	Sternberg	5	10	Spitfire	SW of Eastbourne	7:10 PM	401+402 Sqd	yes
8/17/42	Uffz.	Vogt	6	7	Spitfire	NNW of Fécamp	6:52 PM	401+402 Sqd	yes
8/18/42	Oblt.	Hermichen	3 CO	16	Spitfire	20km S of Dungeness		602 Sqd	yes
8/18/42	Fw.	Willius	3	21	Spitfire	10km W of Cap Gris Nez		602 Sqd	yes

JG 26 Casualties: 1–18 August 1942

Date	Rank	Name	Cas	Unit	Aircraft	WNr	Mkgs	Place	Time	Cause
8/1/42	Lt.	Flock, Arnd	KIA	10(J)	FW 190A-2/U3	5253	wh 5	S of Newhaven	10:50 AM	Spitfire
8/11/42	Fw.	Barthel, Alfred	WIFA	5	FW 190A-2	5412		Epinoy a/f		take-off
8/12/42	Fw.	Weczera, Paul	WIFA	2	FW 190A-2	2054		near Ostend		engine
8/12/42	Uffz.	Stoller, Hans-Joachim	WIFA	2	FW 190A-2	5306		Mardyck a/f		engine
8/18/42	Lt.	Rahardt, Heinz	KIA	2	FW 190A-3	5421	bk 4	Cap Gris Nez	3:00 PM	Spitfire

19 August – The Dieppe Raid

The day began as usual for the Geschwader pilots and ground personnel. The duty pilots arrived at their Staffel dispersals shortly after 0600. The 5th Staffel at Abbeville-Drucat found orders awaiting them. Two aircraft were to take off immediately, fly to the mouth of the Somme, make a brief reconnaissance, and return. Oblt. Horst Sternberg, the only officer among the duty pilots, accepted the mission himself, assigning Uffz. Peter Crump to be his wingman. The two Focke-Wulfs took off at 0620 into the weak dawn light. While underway the

Abbeville command post ordered them to fly to Dieppe. The pair remained at minimum altitude. A short time later, while paralleling the coast, the pilots saw tracers and silent explosions on the Dieppe beach. Drawing closer, the men could make out a number of ships and landing craft, half-hidden in the bluish-gray of the dawn sea mists. Sternberg avoided the beach area, but as the Focke-Wulfs crossed the southern edge of the town, they were taken under fire by German light flak. A stream of tracers reached out to Crump's aircraft and passed cleanly through the wing. At this, Sternberg ordered a return to Abbeville. Sternberg and Crump had been the first members of the Schlagerter Geschwader to witness Operation Jubilee, the Allied raid on Dieppe. By the time they landed at 0733, Luftflotte 3's reaction was well underway.

The Dieppe operation was the first major Allied amphibious assault of the war. Its motivation, planning, and execution have remained the subjects of dispute. Its aerial side, the only one of concern here, is no less controversial than its naval and ground aspects. Air Marshal Sholto Douglas saw the raid as an opportunity to force the elusive Jagdwaffe to do battle on the RAF's own terms. He assigned command responsibility to No. 11 Group's Leigh-Mallory, who was given control of some 750 aircraft for the operation. There were forty-nine fighter squadrons: four Spitfire IX, forty-two Spitfire V, and three Typhoon. There were also eight squadrons of Hurricane fighter-bombers and intruders; four squadrons of reconnaissance Mustangs, flying the first combat missions for the type; and seven squadrons of Blenheims and Bostons.

The German fighter units opposing this large force were the well-tried Kanalgeschwader JG 2 and JG 26, each with about 115 operational fighters. The struggle for air supremacy over the beachhead would thus find the German fighters outnumbered by more than three to one. Although the presence of landing craft in the Channel ports had aroused German suspicions, and the coastal defenses had been brought to an advanced state of readiness, Luftflotte 3's only reaction had been to increase its reconnaissance efforts. Its fighter units had been allowed to follow their usual routines, and had not been reinforced. The only German "day bombers" near the Channel coast were the twenty FW 190s of the two Jabostaffeln. Around 220 night bombers, Do 217s and Ju 88s, were scattered on various bases in the Netherlands and northern France.

A detailed RAF Y-intercept report, a book-length presentation of the Allied side of the air battle by Norman Franks, plus the usual JG 26 sources (logbooks, claims listings, loss reports), allow a minute-by-minute summary of the day's activities to be constructed, although the absence of any times for the First Gruppe claims means that it is less than comprehensive:

0430: All landing craft of the first wave are heading for shore.

0447: A gunboat leading the assault force blunders into five armed trawlers; a bursting star shell destroys the operation's secrecy.

0500: The Dieppe defenses are on full alert. The landing craft and wading troops confront a wall of shellfire of all calibers. The assault plan had waged everything on maintaining secrecy until landfall, and had made no provision for a preliminary bombardment.

0550: The first RAF close-support aircraft arrive. The total bomber force comprises only five squadrons of Hurricanes and one squadron of Bostons.

0620: Oblt. Sternberg and Uffz. Crump take off from Abbeville to obtain

first-hand information for the Jafü 2 commanders and staff. At the same time, 1/JG 2 scrambles from its base at Triqueville, south of the Seine Estuary, and makes for Dieppe.

0630: The rest of 5/JG 26 [including W-F. Galland and Bierwirth] scrambles from Abbeville.

0639: A scratch formation of Second Gruppe pilots [including Mayer] scrambles from Abbeville.

0643: The 5th Staffel encounters Spitfires of the Hornchurch Wing, the first component of the planned “air umbrella”, off Dieppe. Obfw. Heinrich Bierwirth shoots down a No. 340 Sqd. Spitfire.

0645: 1/JG 2 reaches the beachhead from the south and begins hunting down close-support aircraft and their escorts. One Boston and one Spitfire go down immediately; two Spitfires from the arriving cover wings are shot down a few minutes later.

0650: Part of II/JG 2, possibly only the Stabsschwarm, reaches the area from Beaumont-le-Roger. Its Kommandeur quickly shoots down two Mustangs, flying inland on a tactical reconnaissance mission.

0700: A Third Gruppe patrol takes off from Wevelghem. Their mission: a freie Jagd, followed by strafing the Dieppe beaches.

0718: Twenty-six First Gruppe FW 190s take off from Arques, rendezvous with the two Höhenstaffeln, and head for Dieppe.

0728: The Second Gruppe’s first patrol returns to Abbeville.

0742: The First Gruppe is still bringing its aircraft in from its dispersal fields; Fw. Dietze takes off from Merville for the five-minute hop to Arques.

0749: The Second Gruppe’s second patrol takes off from Abbeville and Amiens, and proceeds to Dieppe staggered from 3,200 to 6,500 feet [Philipp, Prym, Glunz, Mayer]. The low altitude is ordered because the Spitfire squadrons’ patrol altitudes are reported to be this low, and because the German pilots’ secondary mission is to be ground strafing.

0800: The four-squadron North Weald Wing arrives off the Dieppe strand and is quickly embroiled in violent dogfights with FW 190s and Bf 109s. Most of the German fighters are from the First Gruppe and the Höhenstaffeln, although the 5th Staffel’s Oblt. Wutz Galland is still north of Dieppe and downs a Spitfire at this time. II/JG 2 is apparently also present. Over the next fifteen minutes the North Weald squadrons lose 6-3 Spitfires, while claiming 5-3-7 FW 190s and 0-1-0 Bf 109.

0830: The Second Gruppe’s second formation patrols Dieppe at 11,000 feet, higher than ordered and well above the Spitfires. The Gruppe bounces the Kenley Wing and shoots down two fighters, one from the American 308th Fighter Squadron. The Americans are part of the 31st Fighter Group. Its three squadrons fly their first major combat mission today, but as components of three different RAF wings. The group is punished severely, losing eight Spitfire Vs and five pilots while claiming 1-3-2 Luftwaffe aircraft. Their American insignia are noticed by some German pilots. The 3rd Staffel’s Oblt. Rolf Hermichen will claim an Airacobra, probably a misidentification of a 31st Fighter Group Spitfire.

According to British radio intercepts, the average number of German

fighters over the beachhead increases from twenty to thirty at this time.

0834: The second patrol of the First Gruppe and the Höhenstaffeln takes off from Arques, Norrent-Fontes and Ligescourt [Babenz, Dietze].

0845: Most of the Second Gruppe's second patrol lands on Abbeville-Drucat. The 6th Staffel's Obfw. Kurt Kruska is still south of Dieppe, where he attacks a Mustang at low altitude. He claims its destruction, but the No. 414 Sqd. aircraft escapes after losing three feet of its left wing in a collision with a telephone pole.

0910: The St. Omer controller orders all of its aircraft (the Stabsschwarm, Höhenstaffeln, First and Third Gruppen) to remain above the Dieppe-Cayeux area as long as possible. Shipping has been reported off Cayeux, at the mouth of the Somme, and a second landing must be taken into consideration.

0915: The Abbeville controller orders a formation to scramble and patrol over the airfield; no RAF aircraft enter the area, and no contact is made [Mayer].

As the West Mallang Wing's Spitfires approach Dieppe, a whirling mass of fighters is visible against a background of black, oily smoke. An estimated fifty Bf 109s and FW 190s dive on the Spitfire formation from the rear and both flanks. The wing will lose 5-3 fighters in the next thirty minutes. S/L Johnnie Johnson's No. 611 Sqd., the top cover, is at only 7,000 feet. Johnson shoots down a FW 190 and shares in the destruction of a Bf 109G, and is then out-turned by another Focke-Wulf. After flying around steeples and under power lines he is only able to escape by flying directly at a destroyer offshore. Johnson will rate this as the hardest battle of his career.

0925: German forces in the West are put on the highest state of alert.

0930: The First Gruppe's second patrol begins landing at Arques.

0936: The Second Gruppe's third patrol takes off from Drucat and Ligescourt [Ebersberger, Glunz, H. Meyer]. The Third Gruppe's second patrol takes off from Wevelghem [Borris, Mietusch, Ellenrieder].

0940: An 11(Höhen)/JG 26 Bf 109G-1 force-lands near Dieppe with severe damage. A few minutes later the Höhenstaffel's Obfw. Emil Babenz claims one of his three victories for the day. Both Messerschmitts have probably been in combat with the West Mallang Wing.

0950: An *ad hoc* Wing comprising Nos. 130 and 131 Squadrons and the American 309th Fighter Squadron arrives off the beachhead and enters the meat grinder. JG 26 pilots claim at least five Spitfires over the next forty minutes; this Wing loses four.

1000: The British commanders decide to begin evacuating the troops on shore.

1019: The Abbeville controller orders his aircraft to make low-level attacks whenever possible.

1030: No. 19 and No. 121 (Eagle) Squadrons reach the beachhead and are engaged by small formations of Focke-Wulfs. In twenty minutes of combat the squadrons lose 5-2 Spitfires. The 7th Staffel's Oblt. Klaus Mietusch probably accounts for two of these.

Up to this time the RAF has lost 27-13 Spitfires, one Hurricane, two

Bostons, and 6-1 Mustangs. According to British radio intercepts, the average number of German fighters over the beachhead has increased to an estimated one hundred. These are now from all units of JG 2 and JG 26; the individual opponents in specific encounters are no longer possible to determine.

1033: The Second Gruppe's third patrol lands on Abbeville-Drucat, Ligescourt, and probably other fields.

1039: The fourth Second Gruppe patrol takes off from Abbeville-Drucat. It is ordered to escort five Do 217s over Dieppe at 6,500 feet, flying from south to north [Mayer, Rieder].

1055: The second Third Gruppe patrol lands on Wevelghem, Arques, and probably other fields.

1100: The first German medium bomber raid reaches Dieppe. It consists of Do 217s from KG 2 "Holzhammer", flying from their bases in the Netherlands. The formation has picked up an escort of Focke-Wulfs from II/JG 26 while en route. The escort is of spotty quality, as the day fighters have never before operated with night bombers. The bombers have been briefed to attack ships, which are the easiest targets to locate. They make their bomb runs at moderate altitude, in small formations of from three to fifteen aircraft. The Dorniers will continue to make small-scale attacks throughout the afternoon, losing sixteen of their number. An estimated total of 145 sorties is flown this day by the German medium bomber force.

The 5th Staffel's Uffz. Hans Rieder is shot down by Spitfires over St. Valéry, while still en route to Dieppe. Rieder is on his first combat mission.

1105: The First Gruppe's third patrol takes off from Arques [Dietze].

1120: The JG 26 Jabostaffel attacks ships off Dieppe. The 2nd Staffel's Obfw. Paul Czwilinski, a member of the escort, is shot down by a Spitfire and crashes into Dieppe harbor.

1123: The Abbeville control orders some aircraft in the area to return to the field and orbit it.

1125: Part of the Second Gruppe's fourth patrol lands on Abbeville-Drucat.

1130: Abbeville-Drucat is bombed by twenty-four B-17s of the 8th Air Force's 97th Bomb Group, escorted by Fighter Command's four Spitfire IX squadrons. The Flying Fortresses make their bombing run from 23,000 feet. Two 6th Staffel Focke-Wulfs are slightly damaged on the ground. The flak defenses score several hits, but no interceptions are made by the German fighters, most of which are occupied elsewhere. The British radio intercept service reports that the airfield is put out of action for several hours, but from the evidence of the German logbooks this is untrue. Combat, ferry and liaison flights continue without interruption. The Allies' first attempt at "battlefield interdiction" by heavy bombers is not a success. A bombing force many times larger than the infant VIII Bomber Command would have been necessary to take out the dozen German airfields within striking range of Dieppe.

1137: The Second Gruppe's fifth patrol takes off from Abbeville-Drucat. Its primary mission is to escort Do 217s; this is to be followed by a freie Jagd and attacks on ground targets [Glunz, W. Meyer].

1200: The withdrawal from the beachhead is well underway. The Spitfire umbrella is unbroken, so by British reckoning, “air superiority” has been achieved and maintained. However, the Germans are playing by different rules. The initial response by the aerial defenders was directed at the RAF fighter force itself, as the British bombers had been so few in numbers that they were impossible to locate and intercept in the general mêlée over Dieppe. By the time the German bombers reached the beachhead the ground battle had already been won, and the Luftwaffe command saw no reason to overstrain itself against an already defeated enemy. Although many German fighters were detailed to escort duty, they reverted whenever possible to their well-practiced tactics of attrition against the numerically-superior Spitfires, and took a heavy toll.

1220: The First Gruppe’s third patrol lands on Arques.

The Abbeville command post plots a new Allied formation over the Somme Estuary, headed east. This is probably the Typhoon Wing, making a diversionary sweep at high altitude to simulate bombers. Both Abbeville and St. Omer keep small numbers of pilots at Sitzbereitschaft. Alarmstarts are ordered periodically from both fields to investigate new reports of Allied air incursions, all of which prove false.

1221: The Third Gruppe’s third patrol takes off from Wevelghem [Ellenrieder, P. Galland, Ruppert].

1230: Fighter Command squadrons continue to arrive from England at low altitude, making easy targets for small formations of FW 190s attacking from above. Five Spitfires and a Mustang are shot down in a few minutes, the victims of the Third Gruppe and various JG 2 units. One FW 190 makes a lone dive out of the sun onto the low squadron of the Biggin Hill Wing, and in a blindingly-quick head-on attack shoots down two fighters. The German pilot is probably Oblt. Herbert Böttcher of 5/JG 2, still flying independently from Ligescourt.

1243: Abbeville scrambles its alert Schwarm [Mayer]. No Allied aircraft are located, and the Focke-Wulfs land ten minutes later.

1300: Fw. Ellenrieder returns early from the Third Gruppe’s third patrol and lands on Abbeville.

1302: The fourth patrol of the First Gruppe and the JG 26 Höhenstaffel takes off from Arques and Norrent-Fontes [Babenz, Dietze].

1330: The evacuation is broken off, leaving many Canadian troops trapped on the beach. Bostons and Hurricanes make one last futile round of attacks on the large gun emplacements that had been most responsible for defeating the landings. Other aircraft lay smoke to cover the withdrawing ships. Fighter Command’s “air umbrella” moves back over the Channel to escort the ships home to England.

1400: Two FW 190s from 10(Jabo)/JG 2 dive on the destroyer *Berkeley*. One scores a direct hit on the ship’s stern with a 1,100 lb bomb. The destroyer is sunk later by British forces, the only major warship lost this day by the Royal Navy. The two Jabostaffeln are employed throughout the day against naval targets; 10(Jabo)/JG 26 reports attacking warships, transports, torpedo boats, and landing craft.

1415: The First Gruppe’s fourth patrol lands on Arques and Norrent-Fontes.

1430: The Third Gruppe's fourth patrol, comprising mainly pilots from the 9th Staffel, takes off from Wevelghem. Its mission is Do 217 escort [Ruppert, Dörre, Golub, Niese, Stammberger].

1431: Again Abbeville scrambles its alert Schwarm [Mayer]. No Allied aircraft are found, and the Focke-Wulfs are back on the ground in seven minutes.

1457: The Third Gruppe escort force holds together until the bombers begin their runs. The German aircraft are then attacked from all directions by Spitfires. A contemporary news account quoted Lt. Otto Stammberger, deputy leader of the 9th Staffel, as follows:

“Then we were in the middle of them; our formation split up, and a disorderly whirlwind ensued. Finally my Rotte broke through and sat above the entire assembly. Thus I could peacefully seek out two unsuspecting cavaliers who were flying around as though on a joy ride. These innocents would pay a bitter price. I reached a good position and gave one of them a full salvo.

When I rushed past him I saw that his aileron was shot through and his landing gear had dropped. The Spitfire also stank [smoked] from the oil cooler. It was obvious that this lad was done for. He fell away and struck the ocean.

While I was watching him, I turned around briefly to ensure my own security. There was the other fellow, waiting to give me a spanking. I refused to let him come near, and vanished. Then I fooled around for a while with my wingman, until my red lamp showed that my fuel was almost gone. So I turned my plane around and headed home. There were the others. The wing-wagging went on seemingly forever.”

Otto Stammberger said later that he was badly misquoted – that neither he nor any other pilot ever used such affected language, but that it was commonly fabricated by the war correspondents of that time. In any event, the battle resulted in Stammberger's first air victory, after eighteen months in the Geschwader.

1500: The 9th Staffel's combats cause it to break up into pairs. Uffz. Niese's wingman Fw. August Golub disappears while Niese is attacking a Spitfire; Golub is shot down and crashes into the Channel nine miles northwest of Dieppe.

1515: The Second Gruppe's sixth and last large patrol takes off from Drucat and Ligescourt [Ebersberger, Glunz, Mayer]. Its mission is to escort bombers, followed by a freie Jagd and attacks on ground targets. For the balance of the day the Second Gruppe's missions will be flown in Staffel strength or less, and are of the nature of freie Jagden and reconnaissance flights.

1548: The Stabsschwarm joins the First Gruppe on the fifth full-strength patrol from St. Omer [Schöpfel, Dietze].

1609: The St. Omer control reports many RAF aircraft circling fifteen miles north of Dieppe. The German radar has detected the Fighter Command air umbrella above the withdrawing invasion fleet.

1629: The Second Gruppe's sixth patrol returns to Drucat and Ligescourt.

1631: The weather over the Channel has closed in. The air over the ships is full of Dorniers, Junkers, Focke-Wulfs, and Spitfires, emerging from the low clouds and dipping back in. Major Schöpfel claims a Spitfire, probably from No. 501 Squadron, whose pilot bails out over the convoy and is quickly pulled from the water.

1650: The Third Gruppe's fifth and last large patrol takes off from Wevelghem. It is to fly a bomber escort, followed by a freie Jagd and attacks on sea targets [Ellenrieder, Ruppert].

1653: The First Gruppe's fifth patrol begins landing on Arques and Wizernes.

1655: The St. Omer controller warns his aircraft not to attack rescue launches setting out from Dieppe, as they are German.

1724: Oblt. Wutz Galland leads a 5th Staffel Schwarm on a freie Jagd to Dieppe [W-F. Galland, Crump]. The former beachhead is found to be a charnel house of corpses, destroyed houses, and abandoned military equipment. The pilots do not see any Allied aircraft, but strafe and destroy a Royal Navy speedboat and a derelict steamship.

1732: A 4th Staffel Schwarm catches part of the withdrawing air armada, and shoots down two Spitfires.

1738: Hptm. Kurt Ruppert, the 9th Staffel Kapitän, shoots down a Spitfire for his third victory of the day.

1743: Fw. Glunz takes off from Ligescourt for the 4th Staffel's dispersal airfield at Amiens; his flying is over for the day.

1753: The First Gruppe's sixth and last full-strength patrol takes off from Arques. It is joined by the Stabsschwarm from Wizernes [Schöpfel, Dietze].

1809: The Third Gruppe's fifth patrol begins landing on Ligescourt and Wevelghem.

1830: Major Schöpfel claims the last victory of the day for the Geschwader. He dives out of a low cloud and shoots up a No. 222 Sqd. Spitfire, which staggers back to England and crash-lands at Hawkinge.

1847: The First Gruppe's sixth patrol lands on Arques and Wizernes.

2000: Fw. Ellenrieder takes off from Ligescourt for the 7th Staffel's dispersal airfield, Lille-Süd.

2028: Fw. Dietze takes off from Arques for the 2nd Staffel's dispersal airfield, Merville.

2032: The Abbeville control reports many RAF aircraft over the Somme Estuary at low altitude. Uffz. Mayer's 6th Staffel Schwarm is scrambled and sent to check out the report; no enemy aircraft are found, and the four Focke-Wulfs land fourteen minutes later.

2100: Uffz. Mayer's 6th Staffel Schwarm takes off one last time to search the Channel off Cayeux for downed aircrew.

2132: Uffz. Mayer's Focke-Wulf touches down on Drucat after his ninth flight. The Geschwader pilots are finished for the day, having flown 377 individual combat sorties on thirty-six missions. The ground crews will work through the night to restore the unit's serviceability before tomorrow morning.



An FW 190A-2 of the Geschwader Stabsschwarm begins its take-off run at Audembert. An identification marking beneath the cockpit has been overpainted; this was probably Hptm. Gäth's "G". (*Bundesarchiv-Bildarchiv*)

The times of three of the Geschwader's six pilot losses are unknown. The Jabostaffel's Uffz. Heinrich von Berg was attacked by a Spitfire after von Berg had bombed a ship off Dieppe. He landed on Drucat, examined his Focke-Wulf, took off again, and crashed before reaching Wizernes. The 5th Staffel's Obfw. Werner Gerhardt, a very experienced pre-war pilot, failed to return from a mission; the details are unknown. At some time during the morning Oblt. Johannes Schmidt, the Kapitän of the Höhenstaffel, was vectored with his Messerschmitts over the sea six miles north of Dieppe. During a low-level dogfight Schmidt attempted a split-S without sufficient recovery altitude and crashed into the Channel; this was most likely during the West Malling Wing's encounter with Bf 109s at c. 0930. His successor as Staffel Kapitän was Oblt. Hans-Jürgen Westphal.

Although the defeat of the British Army and its Canadian allies at Dieppe was too crushing to conceal, the RAF claimed to have won the air battle. No. 11 Group had maintained an apparently overwhelming number of fighters over the battlefield at all times. The German fighters were said to have been forced away from the beachhead to spend the day nibbling away at the periphery of the armada. The RAF's victory claims totalled 47-27-76 FW 190s, 3-1-2 Bf 109s, 33-8-46 Do 217s, 8-3-11 Ju 88s, and 5-0-0 He 111s. The British losses, when totalled at the end of the day, were sobering: seventy-one pilots and ten aircrew were killed or missing, and 106 aircraft had not returned, including eighty-eight fighters. The total number of Luftwaffe aircraft claimed destroyed, ninety-six, was close enough to the RAF's losses to justify belief in a modest air success.

Actual Luftwaffe losses totalled about forty-eight aircraft. A recent study can find no more than twenty-three fighter losses, sixteen from JG 2 and seven from JG 26. Fourteen fighter pilots lost their lives, eight from JG 2 and six from JG

26. JG 2 pilots claimed about sixty aerial victories, while JG 26 claimed about thirty-eight. Even considering that not all of the British losses were to German fighters, the German total of ninety-eight victory claims is a very close match with the actual RAF loss total of 106.

The Allied claims of an overall aerial victory cannot be justified in any sense today. The ratio of aerial victories favored the Germans by a wide margin. Furthermore, the local aerial superiority “won” over Dieppe was a chimera. Temporary occupation of a section of airspace is pointless in itself – it is only of value as a means to an end. At Dieppe, the RAF aerial umbrella aided the endeavors of neither the ground forces nor the pathetically few tactical aircraft. Claims of a successful battle of attrition were bolstered by ULTRA intercepts of the daily Luftwaffe serviceability returns – the 230 single-engine fighters available to the two Kanalgeschwader at dawn on 19 August had been reduced to seventy by sunset. However, the next piece of data in this set was conveniently ignored. By the next morning JG 2 and JG 26 had 194 fighters available for duty; the fighters reported as unserviceable the previous evening included, as usual, all aircraft with armament, engine, or airframe defects of any magnitude. Most were repaired overnight in the Geschwader workshops. The battle of attrition thus resulted in a one-day shortfall of thirty-six fighters, or sixteen per cent.

The ultimate claim of success for the Dieppe operation is as a “rehearsal for D-Day”. The aerial aspects of Operation Overlord, the Normandy invasion, owed nothing to Operation Jubilee, which was in essence nothing more than a day-long Rodeo. The principles of air supremacy and tactical air support that won victory for the Allies in Normandy were developed in the Mediterranean theater and brought to England by Eisenhower’s air staff – most notably Generals Spaatz and Doolittle and Air Marshals Tedder and Coningham.

Operation Torch, the Allied invasion of North Africa, would soon begin siphoning off fighter squadrons from the United Kingdom. The build-up of the US Eighth Air Force in England, while slow, was inexorable. Operation Jubilee thus marked the apogee of both Fighter Command’s numerical strength and its influence on the air war over Western Europe.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 19 August 1942

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
8/19/42	Maj.	Schöpfel	Ge CO	41	Spitfire	off Dieppe	4:31 PM	501 Sqd	yes
8/19/42	Maj.	Schöpfel	Ge CO	42	Spitfire	off Dieppe	6:30 PM	222 Sqd	yes
8/19/42	Hptm.	Seifert	I CO	41	Spitfire	7km W of Dieppe			unk
8/19/42	Uffz.	Christof	1	5	Spitfire	5km NE of Dieppe			unk
8/19/42	Fw.	Adam H-G.	2	5	Spitfire	5km NE of Dieppe			unk
8/19/42	Oblt.	Zink	2 CO	24	Spitfire	3km NW of Dieppe			yes
8/19/42	Oblt.	Zink	2 CO	25	Spitfire	20km NNE of Dieppe			yes
8/19/42	Oblt.	Zink	2 CO	26	Mustang	15km SW of Dieppe			yes
8/19/42	Oblt.	Hermichen	3 CO	17	Spitfire	NE of Dieppe			yes
8/19/42	Oblt.	Hermichen	3 CO	18	Airacobra	near Dieppe			yes
8/19/42	Uffz.	Scheyda	3	2	Spitfire	25km W of Dieppe			yes
8/19/42	Fw.	Willius	3	22	Spitfire	4km NE of Dieppe			unk
8/19/42	Lt.	Prym	4	1	Spitfire	Somme Estuary	8:17 AM	31 FG+ 350 Sqd	yes
8/19/42	Obfw.	Philipp	4	19	Spitfire	SW of Dieppe	8:37 AM	31 FG+ 350 Sqd	yes
8/19/42	Oblt.	Ebersberger	4 CO	25	Spitfire	W of Dieppe	10:03 AM	31 FG+ 130 Sqd	yes
8/19/42	Fw.	Meyer H.	4	1	Spitfire	N of Dieppe	10:07 AM	31 FG+ 130 Sqd	yes

8/19/42	Fw.	Glunz	4	21	Spitfire	W of Dieppe	10:28 AM	31 FG+ 130 Sqd	unk
8/19/42	Oblt.	Ebersberger	4 CO	26	Spitfire	NW of Dieppe	4:07 PM		yes
8/19/42	Obfw.	Philipp	4	20	Spitfire	W of Dieppe	5:32 PM		yes
8/19/42	Obfw.	Roth	4	16	Spitfire	NE of Dieppe	5:52 PM		yes
8/19/42	Obfw.	Bierwirth	5	6	Spitfire	N of Dieppe	6:43 AM	340 Sqd	yes
8/19/42	Oblt.	Galland W-F.	5 CO	14	Spitfire	N of Dieppe	7:55 AM	242+331 +332 Sqd	yes
8/19/42	Obfw.	Kruska	6	2	Mustang	Forêt de Vron	8:45 AM	414 Sqd	yes
8/19/42	Obfw.	Meyer W.	6	16	Spitfire	NE of Dieppe	12:16 PM		unk
8/19/42	Oblt.	Mietusch	7 CO	19	Spitfire	3km NE of Dieppe	10:34 AM	19+ 121 Sqd	unk
8/19/42	Oblt.	Mietusch	7 CO	20	Spitfire	10 km NW of Dieppe	10:35 AM	19+ 121 Sqd	unk
8/19/42	Oblt.	Borris	8 CO	21	Spitfire	Dieppe	10:15 AM	19+ 121 Sqd	yes
8/19/42	Lt.	Galland P.	8	15	Spitfire	Dieppe	12:43 PM		yes
8/19/42	Oblt.	Ruppert K.	9 CO	16	Spitfire	Dieppe	12:40 PM		yes
8/19/42	Lt.	Stammberger	9	1	Spitfire	2km N of Dieppe	2:57 PM		yes
8/19/42	Oblt.	Ruppert K.	9 CO	17	Spitfire	Dieppe	3:00 PM		yes
8/19/42	Uffz.	Dörre	9	2	Spitfire	Dieppe	3:20 PM		yes
8/19/42	Oblt.	Ruppert K.	9 CO	18	Spitfire	Dieppe	5:38 PM		yes
8/19/42	Obfw.	Babenz	11(H)	19	Spitfire	NE of Dieppe			unk
8/19/42	Oblt.	Schmidt J.	11(H)CO	11	Spitfire	W of Dieppe			yes
8/19/42	Oblt.	Schmidt J.	11(H)CO	12	Spitfire	near Dieppe			unk
8/19/42	Obfw.	Babenz	11(H)	20	Spitfire	NE of Dieppe	9:52 AM	411+485 +610 Sqd	yes
8/19/42	Obfw.	Babenz	11(H)	21	Spitfire	NE of Dieppe	1:30 PM		yes

JG 26 Casualties: 19 August 1942

Date	Rank	Name	Cas	Unit	Aircraft	WNr	Mkgs	Place	Time	Cause
8/19/42	Uffz.	Berg, Heinrich von	KIA	10(J)	FW 190A-3/U3	2240		4km N of Hesdin		Spitfire
8/19/42	Oblt.	Schmidt, Johannes	KIA	11(H)CO	Bf 109G-1	14058		10km N of Dieppe		Spitfire
8/19/42	Obfw.	Czwilinski, Paul	KIA	2	FW 190A-2	5396	bk 10	Dieppe harbor	11:20 AM	Spitfire
8/19/42	Uffz.	Rieder, Hans	KIA	5	FW 190A-2	2120	bk 9	Dieppe/ St Valéry	11:00 AM	Spitfire
8/19/42	Obfw.	Gerhardt, Werner	KIA	5	FW 190A-3	538	bk 3	Dieppe area		missing
8/19/42	Fw.	Golub, August	KIA	9	FW 190A-2	5298	yl 6	NW of Dieppe	3:00 PM	Spitfire
8/19/42	Oblt.	Winkelmann	no	II St	FW 190A-3	2557	<<			landing gear

20 August

The St. Omer and Abbeville controllers shuttled patrols from one side of the Pas de Calais to the other to counter RAF formations over the Channel. At 1820 the First Gruppe contacted Spitfires near St. Omer. The Spitfires were on a Rodeo in support of a raid by twelve B-17s on the Amiens railroad yards. The Third Gruppe was scrambled at 1845 to attempt an attack on the bomber formation as it withdrew over Abbeville. Hptm. Priller did not make contact, but part of his Gruppe did, only to be fended off by the Spitfire escort. Fw. Ellenrieder reported combat with Spitfires at altitudes of 26,000 to 33,000 feet.

The 2nd Staffel's Uffz. Jan Schild downed two Hurricanes and a "Stirling" over the Channel on this date, according to his own records, but the claims were not filed owing to a lack of witnesses. The Hurricanes were possibly from an ASR unit, and the Stirling was undoubtedly a B-17, but no Allied losses are known.



Shop talk at Wizernes. From left: Hptm. Seifert (on wing), Hptm. Fromme (in cockpit), Stabsing. Battmer, Oblt. Hösl. (*Petrick*)

Generalfeldmarschall Sperrle visited the Geschwader to offer his congratulations for its performance on the 19th.

The 9th Staffel transferred from Wevelghem to Moorsele as part of the general dispersal program. New revetments were constructed at Moorsele within a week.

21 August

Uffz. Crump flew the morning reconnaissance mission to England. The First and Third Gruppen were scrambled at 1038 and engaged a force of Spitfires north of Gravelines; Hptm. Priller claimed one. Twelve B-17s sent to bomb the Rotterdam shipyards were routed over the North Sea, out of the usual range of JG 26 interceptions. The B-17s' escort had to turn back early, and the honor of the first effective interception of a VIII Bomber Command (VIII BC) formation fell to II/JG 1, which damaged one bomber and killed one crew member. The bombers aborted the mission; one JG 1 Focke-Wulf was damaged by the bombers' fire.

Two JG 26 Focke-Wulfs were lost owing to engine problems. The First Gruppe's Lt. Hermann Hoch had to bail out of his aircraft when it caught fire in the air; Hoch suffered burns. The Third Gruppe's Uffz. Karl Börner crashed his fighter on Moorsele, injuring himself in the process.

22 August

Ogfr. Gomann flew the morning recon mission, another Grossaufklärung from Hastings to Dover. Patrols were sent up during the day by the Abbeville and St. Omer controllers, but no contact was made with the small Spitfire formations

that periodically crossed the coast. The First Gruppe flak unit at Arques did score, however, shooting down a Spitfire.

23 August

It was Fw. Glunz's turn for the morning recon mission. He covered the English coast from Hastings to Eastbourne. Jafü 2 resumed the controller duties from St. Pol, but enemy activity was light, and the few German patrols sent up found nothing. While returning from a patrol the 3rd Staffel's Lt. Wolfgang Neu overturned his Focke-Wulf on Wizernes, injuring himself and causing light damage to the fighter.

Obfw. Hermann Hoffmann left the Second Gruppe for a tour as an instructor at the Ergänzungsjagdgruppe West.

24 August

The Jafü scrambled several patrols versus small Spitfire formations over the coast, but no contact was made. At 1709 seven units, apparently the entire Geschwader and the attached JG 2 Staffeln, were scrambled on the report of a large enemy formation, with bombers, north of Fécamp. This was a VIII BC mission to the Le Trait shipyards on the lower Seine, escorted by the Spitfire IX wing and supported by several sweeps. JG 2's interception, controlled from Le Havre, was ineffective. JG 26's formations reached the area as the bombers withdrew west of Dieppe. The Second Gruppe was engaged by No. 402 Squadron's Spitfire IXs, and the sky over Yvetot was soon a whirling mass of fighters. The Abbeville pilots claimed five Spitfires; the Canadians lost two over France, and three that crash-landed back in England. No Focke-Wulfs were lost or sustained reportable damage. Oblt. Ebersberger was apparently injured in this battle, and was replaced as 4th Staffel Kapitän by Lt. Ernst Janda. This was a disappointing mission for Luftflotte 3. No German fighter reached the bomber formation, and only the Second Gruppe reported any successes against the escort. The 2nd Staffel's Fw. Dietze finished the day's combat flying for the Geschwader with a late-evening recon flight over the English coast.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 20–24 August 1942

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
8/20/42	Uffz.	Schild	2		Hurricane	over Channel			no
8/20/42	Uffz.	Schild	2		Hurricane	over Channel			no
8/20/42	Uffz.	Schild	2		Stirling	over Channel			no
8/21/42	Hptm.	Priller	III CO	76	Spitfire	50km N of Gravelines	11:10 AM		yes
8/22/42		I. Flak Unit	I	1	Spitfire	E of Arques			yes
8/24/42	Oblt.	Ebersberger	4 CO	27	Spitfire	E of Ourville	5:30 PM	402 Sqd	unk
8/24/42	Obfw.	Philipp	4	21	Spitfire	NW of Fécamp	5:35 PM	402 Sqd	unk
8/24/42	Lt.	Strasen	5	1	Spitfire	E of Fécamp	5:45 PM	402 Sqd	unk
8/24/42	Obfw.	Bierwirth	5	7	Spitfire	St. Valéry en Caux	5:30 PM	402 Sqd	unk
8/24/42	Fw.	Fritsch P.	5	1	Spitfire	Veules les Roses	5:32 PM	402 Sqd	unk

25 August

Routine patrols and Alarmstarts were flown in response to Allied flights over the Channel. No contacts were reported.

26 August

At 0934 Obfw. Werner Kassa and Ogfr. Richard Wittmann made a Jagdbomber

attack on an Eastbourne factory. Both Focke-Wulfs were hit by small-arms fire from Canadian infantry. Kassa's aircraft crashed inverted into an Eastbourne dike; Wittmann's was only slightly damaged.

The duty Staffeln spent the morning and early afternoon patrolling the coast under orders from the St. Omer and Abbeville control posts. The Second Gruppe put up a full-strength mission at 1545 and patrolled from Boulogne to Cap Gris Nez. A few aircraft made contact with Spitfires; Uffz. Mayer entered a claim in his logbook, but it was never filed.

At 1808 Hptm. Priller was allowed to lead some Third Gruppe aircraft back across the Channel in pursuit of an Allied formation. They reached Dungeness without making contact. St. Omer recalled the aircraft at 1821, and the Focke-Wulfs were landing on Wevelghem at 1848.

27 August

The pilots of the duty Staffeln began the day early with patrols, sea searches, and convoy escorts. At 1332 the Abbeville and St. Omer controllers scrambled all three Gruppen on reports of bombers approaching both these airfields at low altitude. The bomber force consisted of twelve Bostons, and their target was Abbeville-Drucat. Oblt. Wutz Galland's 5th Staffel, on Sitzbereitschaft, was quick enough off the ground to meet the escorting Spitfires of No. 350 Squadron head-on over Drucat village, which adjoined the airfield. The Spitfire formation broke up and the pursuit began. Obfw. Bierwirth was the first to score, followed by Lt. von Donner and Oblt. Galland. Uffz. Crump caught up to one of the British fighters at the coast. This was the first time he had been in a good attack position since joining the unit. Estimating his lead from what he had been told by other pilots, he opened fire from a climbing right turn at one hundred yards' distance. His first burst of cannon fire struck the engine of the Spitfire, which erupted into flames. The Allied pilot saved himself temporarily by bailing out into the Channel.

Part of the 6th Staffel also caught the raiders, and Uffz. Vogt shot down a Spitfire. The Gruppe's casualties were limited to Obfw. Bierwirth, whose damaged landing gear collapsed while landing back on Drucat. Bierwirth was injured in the very rough landing. Peter Crump's first victory, which made him a "fully-fledged fighter pilot" in his own mind, came five years after joining the Luftwaffe and two years after he first joined a fighter unit on the Channel coast. His 1940 tour with JG 53 was aborted when he was grounded for "defects of character" and sent back to Germany for general military duties. After a year he was allowed to rejoin the Jagdwaffe, but only after repeating his fighter pilot training.

The First Gruppe was not quick enough out of Arques to avoid being caught from above by No. 71 (Eagle) Squadron, flying at 19,000 feet. The Focke-Wulf of Obfw. Friedrich Lindelaub was shot down in the bounce and he bailed out with severe injuries. Two Spitfires went down in the subsequent dogfights.

Hptm. Priller's Third Gruppe was recalled quickly after its scramble, and was back at Wevelghem by 1340. He was up again at 1445 and sent to attack the RAF's rescue operations in the Channel. The formation ran into thirty Spitfires east of Dover, and Hptm. Mietusch downed two of them. The 8th Staffel's Lt. Paul Galland also scored, at an unspecified time. The day's flying wound down with a few late-evening patrols, followed by the nightly dispersal flights.



The 8th Staffel's "black 2" on the flight line outside the Third Gruppe ready room at Wevelghem. (Vanackere)

JG 26 Victory Claims: 26–27 August 1942

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
8/26/42	Uffz.	Mayer	6		Spitfire	unknown	4:00 PM		no
8/27/42	Uffz.	Fast	2	3	Spitfire	10km E of Watten		71 Sqd	yes
8/27/42	Oblt.	Zink	2 CO	27	Spitfire	8km NE of Calais		71 Sqd	yes
8/27/42	Obfw.	Bierwirth	5	8	Spitfire	NE of Rue	1:39 PM	350 Sqd	yes
8/27/42	Lt.	Donner von	5	1	Spitfire	8km WNW of Somme Estuary	1:41 PM	350 Sqd	yes
8/27/42	Oblt.	Galland W-F.	5 CO	15	Spitfire	NW of Somme Estuary	1:45 PM	350 Sqd	yes
8/27/42	Uffz.	Crump	5	1	Spitfire	W of Berck sur Mer	1:50 PM	350 Sqd	yes
8/27/42	Uffz.	Vogt	6	8	Spitfire	W of Somme Estuary	1:43 PM	111 Sqd	yes
8/27/42	Oblt.	Mietusch	7 CO	21	Spitfire	15km SW of Calais	3:10 PM		yes
8/27/42	Oblt.	Mietusch	7 CO	22	Spitfire	20km WNW of Cap Gris Nez	3:16 PM		yes
8/27/42	Lt.	Galland P.	8	16	Spitfire	unknown			unk

JG 26 Casualties: 21–27 August 1942

Date	Rank	Name	Cas no	Unit	Aircraft	WNr	Mkgs	Place	Time	Cause
8/21/42	Lt.	Hoch, Hermann		I St	FW 190A-2	5260		Wizernes		crashed
8/21/42	Uffz.	Horner, Karl	WIFA	9	FW 190A-2	5408	yl 8	Moorsele		engine
8/23/42	Lt.	Neu, Wolfgang	WIFA	3	FW 190A-2	2126				crashed
8/26/42	Obfw.	Kassa, Werner	KIA	10(J)	FW 190A-2/U3	2080	bk 13 +bomb	Eastbourne	9:34 AM	lt flak
8/27/42	Uffz.	Lindelaub, Friedrich	WIA	1	FW 190A-2	5220	wh 7	Ardres		Spitfire
8/27/42	Obfw.	Bierwirth, Heinrich	WIA	5	FW 190A-3	353	bk 11	Somme Estuary		Spitfire

28 August

The St. Omer controller had his duty Staffel up early on reports of Allied aircraft off Dover. The formation did not cross the Channel, and the Germans quickly landed. At 1309 Allied aircraft were detected forming up at high altitude, and the Third Gruppe was scrambled. The Allied force swept from Dunkirk to Cap Gris Nez, but contained no bombers, and was obviously a diversion; the Gruppe was held back from attacking it. The next high-altitude formation was reported to the Abbeville controller at 1405, and proved to be the real thing – twelve B-17s heading for the Avions Potez aircraft factory at Amiens. The Second Gruppe and the Höhenstaffeln quickly took off and strained for altitude. The Le Havre controller scrambled the JG 2 units in his area. A number of German fighters thus converged on Amiens, but were unable to penetrate the screen of Spitfire IXs to get to the bombers. The Second Gruppe was attacked by No. 401 Squadron, and downed one Spitfire IX without loss. No. 611 Squadron shot down an 11(Höhen)/JG 2 Messerschmitt, whose pilot bailed out with injuries. The Second Gruppe was scrambled twice more during the afternoon to oppose Fighter Command sweeps, but did not make contact. Hptm. Priller took advantage of a clear summer evening to make a familiarization flight in a Bf 109G.

29 August

The day's flying began at dawn with an uneventful convoy escort. At 1120 the St. Omer controller directed the Third Gruppe to scramble and wait over Ostend for a Spitfire formation withdrawing from a sweep of St. Omer. Hptm. Priller and his pilots chased the Spitfires out to sea and engaged them nine miles west of Cap Gris Nez, claiming two. The Abbeville controller was the next to send aircraft aloft; the 4th Staffel, on alert at Drucat, was scrambled to intercept a small formation over the Somme Estuary. This proved to be a pair of Mosquito day bombers returning from a raid. The Focke-Wulfs caught them and shot one into the Channel off Dungeness; the second Mosquito crash-landed on Lympne.

At 1231 the St. Omer controller scrambled the First Gruppe to oppose a Fighter Command sweep, but missed the major raid of the day – an attack by twelve B-17s on Wevelghem airfield. According to the interrogation report of a pilot later taken prisoner, the field had next to no warning of the raid, and a number of men were killed before they could take shelter. The bombs were dropped from 23,000 feet in a very tight pattern, and considerable damage was done. Hptm. Priller and his duty Staffel were at Sitzbereitschaft and were forced to stay in their aircraft during the raid, “a particularly nerve-racking experience”.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 28–29 August 1942

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
8/28/42	Lt.	Janda	4	2	Spitfire	S of Amiens	2:39 PM	401 Sqd	yes
8/28/42	Oblt.	Galland W-F.	5 CO	16	Spitfire	E of Amiens	2:35 PM	401 Sqd	unk
8/28/42	Uffz.	Mayer	6		Spitfire	unknown	2:45 PM	401 Sqd	no
8/29/42	Obfw.	Philipp	4	22	Mosquito	SE of Hastings	12:53 PM	105 Sqd	unk
8/29/42	Lt.	Aistleitner	III St	10	Spitfire	unknown			unk
8/29/42	Hptm.	Priller	III CO	77	Spitfire	15km NW of Cap Gris Nez	11:46 AM		unk

31 August

The 2nd Staffel's Fw. Dietze completed the morning reconnaissance flight over southern England before the weather closed in, ending the flying for the day and the month.

Chapter Eleven

A NEW ENEMY

September – December 1942

1 September

Routine patrols and Alarmstarts were flown, without contacting Allied aircraft. One Second Gruppe aircraft was damaged after a scramble while landing on Amiens-Glisy with a blown tire.

A Jabostaffel Schwarm attacked a Dungeness barracks. Obfw. Friedrich Wagner's aircraft was hit by anti-aircraft fire. Wagner ditched it in the Channel, but it sank immediately, taking Wagner down with it.

Oblt. Robert Weiss transferred this month from the 6th Staffel to 3/JG 54, on the Eastern Front.

2 September

The morning reconnaissance flight was flown by the 1st Staffel's Obfw. Waldemar Söffing and Uffz. Konrad von Jutrzenka. They took off from Arques at 1000 and crossed the Channel at 22,000 feet. Shortly after making landfall near Beachy Head they were warned by radio of British fighters near Dungeness, altitude unknown. After maintaining a high state of alert for several minutes, the two pilots dropped through a cloud bank to look for shipping off Eastbourne. Momentarily distracted, they were bounced by two Spitfires from No. 401 Squadron (RCAF). Söffing's aircraft was riddled; his engine caught fire and poured black and gray smoke, and a three-foot piece of the left aileron dropped down into the slipstream. His pursuer flew alongside after exhausting his ammunition on the Focke-Wulf. He saw Söffing slumped over in the cockpit and assumed he was dead; the Canadian pilot then watched in amazement as the German fighter crossed over the French coast, still in level flight. A minute after the Spitfire turned back, Söffing bailed out, uninjured.

Söffing's wingman did not fare as well. Von Jutrzenka's aircraft was also hit hard, and went out of control. When it righted itself momentarily, von Jutrzenka bailed out into the Channel. The Canadian pilots radioed his position and orbited the site until a rescue launch arrived. From the RAF interrogation centre in London, where he remained as an honored guest for several weeks, the grateful pilot mailed his victors his lifejacket as a souvenir.

The rest of the Geschwader saw the day pass without incident.

3-4 September

Routine patrols and Alarmstarts were flown without contacting Allied aircraft. Two First Gruppe Focke-Wulfs collided while taking off from Wizernes, injuring one pilot.

5 September

In the morning two raids were flown by VIII Bomber Command. The Le Havre port area was attacked by a dozen A-20 light bombers; an hour later, two groups of B-17s bombed the Rouen-Sotteville railroad yards, escorted by four squadrons of Spitfire IXs. The initial interceptions were left to JG 2, and proved ineffective. The Allied formations avoided the Pas de Calais, and the Geschwader patrolled its own area until 1130, when Hptm. Conny Meyer's Second Gruppe was ordered to Dieppe. The Gruppe caught the withdrawing heavy bomber formation off Le Treport and punished the escorts severely, although once again they were unable to reach the bombers. Six victory credits for downed Spitfires were awarded to the "Abbeville Boys". Four Free French pilots from No. 340 Squadron were lost, and one Spitfire from No. 64 Squadron crashed into the Channel. The returning Allied pilots claimed 2-1-3 FW 190s, but none sustained recordable damage.

The Geschwader spent the rest of the day in routine patrolling.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 5 September 1942

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
9/5/42	Hptm.	Meyer K-H.	II CO	9	Spitfire	15km N of Somme Estuary	11:41 AM	64+340 Sqd	yes
9/5/42	Fw.	Glunz	4	22	Spitfire	Somme Estuary	11:41 AM	64+340 Sqd	yes
9/5/42	Lt.	Strasen	5	2	Spitfire	Le Treport	11:32 AM	64+340 Sqd	yes
9/5/42	Oblt.	Galland W-F.	5 CO	17	Spitfire	Le Treport	11:35 AM	64+340 Sqd	yes
9/5/42	Uffz.	Budde	6	1	Spitfire	W of Cayeux	11:32 AM	64+340 Sqd	yes
9/5/42	Obfw.	Meyer W.	6	17	Spitfire	W of Somme Estuary	11:32 AM	64+340 Sqd	yes

6 September

The Jafü 2 controllers plotted little activity until late afternoon. At 1745 the First and Third Gruppen were scrambled and sent to Ostend at high altitude. Their target was a small formation of B-17s en route to bomb the Wizernes airfield, in support of a larger attack to follow. The Gruppen could not get into position, and made only a few ineffective passes at the bombers, but the bombers missed the airfield entirely. A simultaneous A-20 raid on Abbeville-Drucat bombed open ground; the Second Gruppe ground personnel never realized they had been attacked. The Gruppe's fighters were already airborne and headed for Amiens, under the direction of the Jafü. The Potez aircraft factory there was the target for fifty-one VIII Bomber Command B-17s. The Spitfire IX escort wing had missed their rendezvous, and did not reach the bombers until Hptm. Meyer's Focke-Wulfs were already diving out of the sun onto the B-17s. The high cover, No. 133 (Eagle) Squadron, was then bounced at 28,000 feet and dispersed by JG 2 Focke-Wulfs attacking from above and behind. The rest of the close escort was kept occupied by the 4th Staffel, which downed one Spitfire. The bombers underwent repeated attacks by forty-five to fifty FW 190s and a few Höhenstaffel Bf 109s. Attacks came from all directions, and nearly all of the B-17s sustained damage. The honor of the Luftwaffe's first "kill" of an American heavy bomber went to Hptm. Meyer. His target, a B-17F of the 97th

Bomb Group, went down near Amiens at 1855. The Focke-Wulfs pursued the bombers back across the French coast. A B-17E of the 92nd Bomb Group succumbed to attacks by at least five FW 190s, and crashed into the sea near Le Treport. JG 2 lost two Focke-Wulfs and one pilot in this battle; JG 26 came through it unscathed.

The First and Third Gruppen were scrambled late as a reserve force, but did not make contact with the Amiens raiders. The 9th Staffel's Lt. Stammberger ended the day's combat flying with a reconnaissance of the English coast from Margate to Dover; the pilots then flew to their dispersal fields for the night.



A well-equipped but unidentified Adamsonstaffel pilot prepares for a mission from Wevelghem. (G. Schmidt)

The credit for the day's successful interception belonged to the German radar and radio intercept services and to the fighter control organization, which were rapidly rising to the new challenge. Any major increase in activity on the American radio frequencies foretold a genuine raid; American strength was insufficient for major diversions. German radar could pick up the formations before they crossed the English coast, which had not been the case with the Channel-hugging Circuses. Morale in the Geschwader picked up, although the pilots were frustrated by their inability to bring down more bombers.

It was obvious to the German commanders that although the American heavy bombers had taken on the role formerly played by the weak RAF Blenheim and Boston formations, there was one major difference – the B-17s, however small their numbers, carried a bomb load of sufficient size to punish their targets. Thus the

Germans no longer could decline to attack the bombers when circumstances were unfavorable – they were forced to defend against every raid, and therefore lost the tactical initiative that they had maintained for more than a year. Oberst Galland kept the pressure on Major Schöpfel and Major Oesau. Their percentage of successful interceptions had to be sharply increased; only then might the new threat be nipped in the bud.

7 September

The targets for VIII Bomber Command were Rotterdam and Utrecht, and the Third Gruppe, flying from the easternmost of the Geschwader bases, was the only JG 26 unit to see combat. The Gruppe took off at 1040 and was quickly engaged by Spitfires sweeping the coast. One Spitfire was claimed. JG 1 inter-

cepted the bomber force and was met by the Spitfire IX escort wing, which shot down three JG 1 Focke-Wulfs without loss to itself or the bombers.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 6–7 September 1942

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
9/6/42	Hptm.	Meyer K-H.	II CO	10	B-17	NW of Amiens	6:55 PM	97 BG	yes
9/6/42	Oblt.	Naumann	4	9	Spitfire	N of Hellancourt	6:54 PM	402 Sqd	yes
9/6/42	Obfw.	Roth	4	17	B-17	NW of Le Treport	7:06 PM	92 BG	yes
9/6/42	Uffz.	Mayer	6		B-17	unknown	6:45 PM		no
9/7/42	Uffz.	Niese	9	1	Spitfire	N of Dunkirk	11:09 AM		yes

8 September

Routine patrols were flown, without contact. Several Third Gruppe pilots flew an unsuccessful sea search for the JG 1 pilots shot down on the 7th.

9 September

Routine patrols and Alarmstarts were flown, without contact. While on a training flight from Wevelghem the 9th Staffel's Uffz. Otto Grohmann nearly rammed his Rottenführer, Uffz. Niese. Grohmann overcompensated and spun out. He flew into a cloud and was unable to recover before striking the ground.

10 September

Several RAF formations crossed the French coast, but the controllers for the most part kept the German fighters away from them. The 2nd Staffel engaged a force that had just flown over "the airfield", probably Arques, but without success.



Pilots of 10(Jabo)/JG 26 await inspection at St. Omer-Wizernes in September. From left: unknown, Uffz. Werner Schammert (arms crossed), (POW 10 Oct 42), Fw. Emil Boesch (KIA 12 Mar 43), unknown, Uffz. Richard Wittmann, Fw. Knobeloch, Uffz. Schwarz, Uffz. Alfred Immervoll (KIA 23 Jan 43). (Wittmann)

16 September

After several days on the ground aircraft of Fighter Command and the Schlager Geschwader met again over the French coast. The Spitfire IX wing crossed St. Valéry at ground level, climbed to Abbeville, where it was engaged by the 4th Staffel, and exited France at Hardelot, after losing one Spitfire.

18 September

Routine patrols and Alarmstarts were carried out, without contact. Hptm. Priller flew an uneventful mission to escort rescue ships off Ostend. The object of the ships' search is unknown.

19 September

The 9th Staffel's Fw. Gerhard Corinth was killed while transferring an airplane from Wevelghem to Moorsele. He lost control while banking over Moorsele, crashed, and burned; weather may have been a factor.

JG 26 Casualties: September 1942

Date	Rank	Name	Cas	Unit	Aircraft	WNr	Mkgs	Place	Time	Cause
9/1/42	Obfw.	Wagner, Friedrich	KIA	10(J)	FW 190A-2/U3	5315	bk 4+ <bomb	Cap Gris Nez-Dungeness		flak
9/2/42	Fw.	Söffing, Waldemar	no	1	FW 190A-4	5598		Samer		Spitfire
9/2/42	Uffz.	Jutrzenka, Konrad von	POW	1	FW 190A-4	7039	wh 11	off Beachy Head	11:55 AM	Spitfire
9/3/42	Obfw.	Eichinger, Leopold	WIFA	3	FW 190A-3	7007		Wizernes a/f		ground collision
9/9/42	Uffz.	Grohmann, Otto	KIFA	9	FW 190A-2	2121	yl 2	Wevelghem a/f	6:04 PM	crashed
9/19/42	Fw.	Corinth, Gerhard	KIFA	9	FW 190A-4	5620		Moorsele a/f		crashed

20 September

Oblt. Theo Lindemann left the 6th Staffel to join his friend Joachim Müncheberg in JG 77. Oblt. Hans Naumann transferred from the 4th Staffel to become Staffelführer of the 6th.

22 September

Routine patrols and Alarmstarts were flown. Shortly after noon the entire Third Gruppe was scrambled to intercept what proved to be a pair of Bostons on one of their infrequent low-altitude missions. Hptm. Mietusch won the race to reach the unescorted targets, and downed one of the bombers; the second was able to escape.

23 September

The 1st Staffel's Lt. Artur Beese claimed a Spitfire three miles west of Cap Gris Nez; no further information is available.

A draft of replacement pilots arrived from the Ergänzungsjagdgruppe West, and were assigned as follows: First Gruppe: Ogfr. Erich Eschke, Uffz. Anton Jenner, Ogfr. Willi Muskatewicz, Uffz. Horst Schwentik; Second Gruppe: Uffz. Georg Granabetter.



Oblt. Theo Lindemann (left) at the time of his departure from JG 26 on 20 September. In the center is Oblt. Hans Naumann, his successor as 6th Staffel Kapitän; on the right is Lt. Rudolf Leuschel (KIA 25 Feb 44). (*Naumann*)

JG 26 Victory Claims: 16–23 September 1942

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
9/16/42	Fw.	Meyer H.	4	2	Spitfire	Ault	1:10 PM	611 Sqd	yes
9/22/42	Hptm.	Mietusch	7 CO	23	Boston	3km E of Ostend	1:15 PM	226 Sqd	yes
9/23/42	Lt.	Beese	1	6	Spitfire	5km W of Cap Gris Nez			yes

24 September

The 5th Staffel's Ogfr. Gomann flew the morning reconnaissance mission, and succeeded in locating some attractive shipping targets off Hastings. At 1700 the Jabostaffeln flew a maximum-strength mission to attack these ships, escorted by several of the fighter Staffeln. Results are unknown; no losses were sustained.

26 September

Routine patrols and Alarmstarts were flown, without result. The day's excitement took place far to the west, over Brittany. No. 133 (Eagle) Squadron, part of the escort for a B-17 raid on Cherbourg, got lost owing to unexpected high winds at altitude, a solid undercast, and poor leadership, and lost all twelve of its Spitfire IXs and ten pilots.

29 September

A few patrols and convoy escort missions were carried out, but the Allies remained on their side of the Channel. Fw. Glunz flew the evening reconnaissance mission, covering the English coast from Dungeness to Beachy Head.

30 September

Routine test flights were flown, but the Geschwader otherwise stayed on the ground.

1 October

Routine patrols and Alarmstarts were carried out, without contacting Allied aircraft. The 2nd Staffel's Fw. Dietze flew the evening recon mission to the English coast.

2 October

The morning passed quietly. Shortly after noon the radio activity indicative of a VIII Bomber Command mission was intercepted. The raid was in two parts: thirty-two B-17s returned to the Avions Potez factory near Amiens, while six bombed the Wizernes airfield. Several diversionary raids and sweeps were ignored by the controllers, but the principal diversion, a three-wing sweep of the Pas de Calais, was met near Calais by the First Gruppe. The 4th Fighter Group, formed from the three RAF Eagle squadrons and flying its first mission as an American unit, refused to dive after the Gruppe's decoy Staffel, but accepted combat with fifteen Focke-Wulfs at its own altitude of 24,000 feet. It did a creditable job, downing two FW 190s whose pilots, Fw. Günther Rau and Uffz. Hans-Joachim Stoller, bailed out with injuries. Oblt. Zink claimed an Airacobra, probably a 4th FG Spitfire with American insignia, but all of the American Spitfires returned to Debden. The Third Gruppe met the withdrawing Spitfires over the Channel and probably accounted for the sweep's other two losses, both from No. 331 Squadron. One 9th Staffel aircraft was shot down in this latter combat, its pilot bailed out uninjured.

The Wizernes raiders made their appearance before the First Gruppe could re-form, and faced only scattered attacks. The six bombers put a close pattern of bombs on the dispersals, causing a number of casualties and destroying two utility aircraft. The B-17s were escorted by the P-38s of the 1st Fighter Group, flying its first mission as a unit. One Lightning straggled and was not seen again, the victim of a 2nd Staffel pilot.

The Amiens force was expected to attract most of the defenders, and was thus assigned the most capable escort unit, the Spitfire IX wing. III/JG 2, the Second Gruppe, and the Höhenstaffeln all reached the bombers as they were coming off their bomb run, splitting the escort and making quick passes at the B-17s from all directions. Several bombers were damaged. Three III/JG 2 Focke-Wulfs went down, killing two pilots. The 4th Staffel's Oblt. Elmar Göcke was hit while making a stern attack on the bomber formation. He succeeded in force-landing his damaged aircraft, but died in the hospital. Lt. Rudolf Leuschel's FW 190 was damaged by a Spitfire. He collided with another Focke-Wulf while landing on Cambrai, destroying both aircraft. The escorts also succeeded in shooting down a 11(Höhen)/JG 26 Bf 109G-1, whose pilot bailed out without injury, while losing one Spitfire to a Second Gruppe pilot. All of the B-17s returned to base.

The 6th Staffel's Uffz. Mayer flew the evening recon mission to England, following which the pilots withdrew to their dispersal fields.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 2 October 1942

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
10/2/42	Oblt.	Zink	2 CO	28	Airacobra	10km NW of Cap Blanc Nez	3:40 PM	4 FG	unk
10/2/42	Uffz.	Stoller	2	1	P-38	near Calais	4:25 PM	1 FG	yes
10/2/42	Lt.	Hoppe	6	1	Spitfire	Somme Estuary	4:58 PM	401 Sqd	yes
10/2/42	Ogfr.	Hager V.	7	3	Spitfire	unknown	3:35 PM	331 Sqd	yes
10/2/42	Lt.	Stammberger	9		Spitfire	E of Deal	3:40 PM	331 Sqd	no

JG 26 Casualties: 2 October 1942

Date	Rank	Name	Cas	Unit	Aircraft	WNr	Mkgs	Place	Time	Cause
10/2/42	Oblt.	Göcke, Elmar	KIA	4	FW 190A-2	5411	wh 5	nr Amiens		B-17
10/2/42	Uffz.	Stoller, Hans-Joachim	WIA	2	FW 190A-4	2371	bk 5	Bollezeele		Spitfire
10/2/42	Fw.	Rau, Günther	WIA	3	FW 190A-4	668		Aire		Spitfire
10/2/42	Lt.	Leuschel, Rudolf	WIA	6	FW 190A-4	7057	br 3	nr Cambrai		Spitfire + landing



After Hptm. Müncheberg left the Geschwader his FW 190A-2, W.Nr. 257, continued to see service as the 6th Staffel's "brown 12". (Petrick)

3 October

There was little flying by the Geschwader. Fw. Dietze received combat sortie credit for a late afternoon Alarmstart, but no details are known.

4 October

The engine of the Jabostaffel's Uffz. Karl Baumgartner failed after he had taken off for a mission, and he was injured in his subsequent forced-landing. The fighter Staffeln saw little activity.

5 October

The inactivity of the fighter Staffeln persisted. Some test flights were made. Fw. Dietze once again flew to England for the evening reconnaissance.

The First Staffel was relocated, moving the few miles from Arques to Clairmarais.

7 October

The engine of Oblt. Kurt Ebersberger's Focke-Wulf failed on a transfer flight, and he was injured while force-landing near Ligescourt. He had not yet been restored to combat status after his August injury, and his return to duty was further postponed.

Fw. Dietze was up again this evening, today escorting Jabos. He made contact with Allied aircraft, and was given credit for a combat sortie.

8 October

Routine patrols were carried out. A First Gruppe FW 190 force-landed near Gravelines with a bad engine. The aircraft was on a combat flight, but it is not known whether it had sustained combat damage. Fw. Dietze made two flights in the afternoon: an uneventful reception flight for returning Jabos, and a later escort for another Jabo mission, for which he was given combat sortie credit.

Lt. Heinrich Jessen reported to the Geschwader from the training school at Villacoublay and was assigned to the 3rd Staffel. Jessen was a former radioman and a decorated veteran of the Spanish Civil War.

9 October

The Jabos were up early, apparently to attack a convoy east of Dover, and Fw. Dietze was up also, making two flights to escort and support them. Reports of a large force of American bombers brought the Third Gruppe into the air at 1025, followed shortly thereafter by the Second Gruppe and the Höhenstaffeln. The raid was the strongest American effort to date. One hundred and eight bombers were dispatched to attack the locomotive works and steel factory at Lille, the first time these important industrial targets had been targeted by the Allies since the arrival of the FW 190 on the Kanalfont in strength. Thirty-six squadrons of Spitfires and P-38s were assigned to support the bombers. There was no direct escort, but rather two target support forces, plus two rear support forces and three diversionary forces. Fighter Command's plan was far too complex; the coming battle would be conducted as if there had been no Allied fighters in the air at all.

Hptm. Priller led his Gruppe west from Wevelghem in a maximum-speed climb. This was Priller's first sight of B-17s from the air. He misjudged their size and thus underestimated their altitude. He had to repeat his attack orders three times as he reached what he thought was the bombers' altitude, only to see them still above him. The bombers flew in vics of three, but in no apparent overall formation; they reminded the 9th Staffel's Lt. Otto "Stotto" Stammberger of a large swarm of bumblebees. (The size of the bomber force had been whittled down to sixty-nine by early returns, and the formation's integrity had been compromised.) The bombers passed by the fighters, which were still climbing through 26,000 feet. The bomber formation then made a sharp left turn south of Lille, and the Focke-Wulf pilots were able to reach attack position. Pairs of fighters attacked the individual vics from the rear. Hptm. Priller saw his target, a B-24 of the 93rd Bomb Group, crash north of Lille. It had been on the first VIII Bomber Command B-24 mission.

Oblt. Ruppert led his 9th Staffel against another formation of bombers,

B-17s from the 306th Bomb Group. He saw the contrails of the fighter escort, but they remained far above the fight. His pilots attacked the bombers from the rear, as briefed. Ruppert's target dropped away from the formation; he would be given credit for a *Herausschuss* or "shoot-out" for culling it from its formation. Stammberger attacked this Fortress, but saw that his fire was having no effect. He suddenly realized that he was firing from too great a range. Approaching closer, he saw strikes on the bomber's left wing. Still unmolested by the Allied fighters, he attacked the bomber repeatedly. By the third pass both left engines were blazing; he then fired at the right outboard engine as the bomber spiralled downward in broad left turns. Four or five men bailed out at 6,000 feet; the Fortress then hit the ground east of Vendeville. Stammberger gave his full attention to the crash of the bomber. When he again looked up, the sky was empty. Out of ammunition, he headed back to the 9th Staffel's base at Moorsele.

Hptm. Mietusch's 7th Staffel also made an effective attack. Mietusch had overcome his earlier hesitation in the air, and now had to guard against pressing his attacks too closely. Mietusch identified his first target as a Stirling, but it was in fact a 301st Bomb Group B-17, which dropped from formation but made it back to England. Mietusch made a second pass through the formation and damaged a bomber that later made the first successful B-17 ditching in the Channel. Mietusch's wingman, Uffz. Viktor Hager, was hit by defensive fire in the first attack. He jumped from his plane, but was unable to open his parachute because of his injuries and fell to his death. Another 7th Staffel pilot, Lt. Walter Meyer, was credited with downing a 92nd Bomb Group B-17; according to its bombardier, who survived as a prisoner, it had actually been hit by a number of fighters, attacking from all angles.

The Third Gruppe's toll of four bombers was the heaviest single-mission loss yet suffered by the 8th Air Force. Nevertheless, the Americans proclaimed a decisive victory over the Luftwaffe. The gunners claimed fifty-six fighters destroyed, twenty-six probably destroyed, and twenty damaged. Although Allied intelligence knew full well that these claims added up to more than the strength of the entire German defensive force, and the total was subsequently lowered, the original numbers were quoted in a radio broadcast by President



FW 190A-3 "yellow 11", assigned to the 9th Staffel's Fw. Werner Kraft – Moorsele, Autumn 1942. (*Vanoverbeke*)

Roosevelt himself, to the great amusement of the Schlager pilots, who had suffered only one casualty.

This raid on Lille marked the high point of the American effort in 1942. The two most experienced heavy bomb groups and four of the five American fighter groups were withdrawn from combat in preparation for a move to North Africa. The bomber groups left in England were inadequately trained, and had to be introduced to combat slowly. The first raid to exceed that of 9 October in strength was not mounted until 17 April 1943.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 9 October 1942

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
10/9/42	Maj.	Priller	III CO	78	B-24	SW of Roubaix/ Wevelghem	10:35 AM	93 BG	yes
10/9/42	Hptm.	Mietusch	7 CO		Stirling-cull	Lille	10:35 AM	301 BG	no
10/9/42	Hptm.	Mietusch	7 CO		B-17	NE of Lille	10:45 AM	301 BG	no
10/9/42	Lt.	Meyer W.	7	18	B-17	unknown	10:55 AM	92 BG	yes
10/9/42	Oblt.	Ruppert K.	9 CO	19	B-17-cull	unknown	10:40 AM	306 BG	unk
10/9/42	Lt.	Stammberger	9	2	B-17	E of Vendeville	10:45 AM	306 BG	yes

10 October

There was little or no flying by the fighter Staffeln. At 0845 a Jabostaffel Schwarm bombed a gasoline storage tank on the English coast and strafed the Manston control tower. Uffz. Werner Schammert returned to Manston ten minutes later for another attack. The ground defenses were ready, and hit his aircraft. Schammert pulled up to 2,000 feet, bailed out, and was immediately taken prisoner.

Gottfried Dietze was commissioned as a Leutnant and transferred from the 2nd to the 1st Staffel.

11 October

Lt. Dietze took off from Clairmarais for the morning reconnaissance flight to England, but was forced to return shortly after take-off owing to landing gear trouble. The Geschwader spent the rest of the morning on routine patrols. At 1509, after receiving reports of two large Allied formations on either side of Dunkirk, the controllers ordered the three Gruppen to scramble. While taking off from Wevelghem the 7th Staffel's Lt. Walter Meyer collided with his wingman, Uffz. Karl Käferle. Both aircraft were destroyed, and both pilots were injured, Meyer severely. Meyer never left the Lille hospital. He contracted tuberculosis there and died in January 1943.

The Allied force was a multi-Wing Rodeo, headed for St. Omer. The First Gruppe left Arques and Clairmarais and climbed to the northwest to put the sun at the pilots' backs for an attack during the Spitfires' return flight. There was some difficulty in obtaining a good position, owing to the presence of more Spitfires farther west, but a successful interception was made east of Dunkirk. Three First Gruppe pilots claimed Spitfires, the first claims for each. The Second Gruppe was ordered to land as soon as the absence of bombers was confirmed; the Third Gruppe was permitted to chase the withdrawing Spitfires, but was unable to obtain an attack position, and returned after an hour in the air.



An early FW 190A-4 of the Geschwader Stab, W.Nr. 5613, which was probably assigned on paper to the technical officer, Ernst Battmer, although he was a civilian who did not fly missions – St. Omer-Wizernes, Autumn 1942. (*Meyer*)

JG 26 Casualties: 4–11 October 1942

Date	Rank	Name	Cas	Unit	Aircraft	WNr	Mkgs	Place	Time	Cause
10/4/42	Uffz.	Baumgartner, Karl	WIFA	10(J)	FW 190A-3/U3	248		S Campagne		engine
10/7/42	Oblt.	Ebersberger, Kurt	WIFA	4 CO	FW 190A-4	5646		Ligescourt		engine
10/9/42	Uffz.	Hager, Viktor	KIA	7	FW 190A-4	7043	wh 2	Chemin de Mesnine	11:20 AM	B-17
10/10/42	Uffz.	Schammert, Werner	POW	10(J)	FW 190A-3/U3	420	bk 7+ <bomb	W of Margate	8:55 AM	flak
10/11/42	Lt.	Meyer, Walter	KIFA	7	FW 190A-4	660	wh 5	Wevelghem	3:17 PM	ground collision
10/11/42	Uffz.	Käferle, Karl	WIFA	7	FW 190A-4	5631	wh 6	Wevelghem	3:17 PM	ground collision

12 October

Uffz. Mayer flew the morning reconnaissance mission to England. Lt. Dietze was up a little later on an escort mission, probably for Jabos. The 2nd Staffel's Uffz. Fast claimed a Spitfire off Cap Gris Nez at some point during the day; the time of his combat is unknown. The most significant activity by Geschwader aircraft was a noon attack on Brighton by the Jabostaffel; the raid killed five civilians and demolished twenty houses.

The re-equipment of the Geschwader with the FW 190A-4 was now almost complete. This variant was equipped with a methanol-water power boost system (MW 50) to increase engine output below 16,000 feet, and a new VHF radio, the FuG 16Z, which had multiple channels and homing capabilities. This radio, together with the FuG 25a IFF apparatus now carried by all of the Geschwader aircraft, made it easy for the Jafü to control several formations simultaneously. The earlier practice of direct control from the Gruppe command posts was abandoned, explaining an otherwise cryptic note in the Second Gruppe records that it was on this date “directly subordinated to the Geschwader”.

14 October

The 5th Staffel monopolized the day's reconnaissance missions: Ogfr. Gomann took part in the morning mission, and he and Uffz. Crump flew the one in the evening. One Second Gruppe Focke-Wulf was damaged slightly by a Spitfire near Le Touquet; its pilot made a clean forced landing on Drucat.

15 October

The RAF's attention was drawn to Le Havre, where the German ship *Neumark* had taken refuge. Several attacks were made on the ship and the harbor. The three JG 26 Gruppen were scrambled in mid-afternoon in case any of the activity to the west carried over into their territory. The First and Third Gruppen remained over the Pas de Calais, while the Second flew west over the Channel. The 5th Staffel made contact with twenty Spitfires between Fécamp and Le Havre, and Oblt. Galland shot one of them down.

Two of the First Gruppe's best NCO pilots, Obfw. Emil Babenz and Fw. Karl Willius, were awarded the German Cross in Gold, a new medal ranking between the Iron Cross and the Knight's Cross. The gaudy chest decoration was known throughout the Luftwaffe as the "Spiegelei", or "Fried Egg". Babenz had twenty-one air victories at this time; Willius, twenty-two.

16 October

Oblt. Stammberger flew on the morning recon mission; Lt. Dietze, the evening's. Two Third Gruppe Staffel Kapitäne, Hptm. Klaus Mietusch and Hptm. Kurt Ruppert, were awarded the "Spiegelei". Mietusch had twenty-three air victories, while Ruppert had nineteen.

Fw. Willi Mackenstedt rejoined the 6th Staffel after serving as an instructor in the Ergänzungsjagdgruppe West.

17 October

At noon Lt. Dietze flew another uneventful escort mission, probably a reception flight for returning Jabos. An hour later a Schwarm of Jabos left St. Omer for Hastings, where a row of houses was strafed. On the return flight the Focke-Wulfs were attacked by fighters that the German pilots identified as Tomahawks; Fw. Karl Niesel was hit and crashed in the Channel. The Allied aircraft were Hawker Typhoons from No. 486 Sqd. (RNZAF); the very existence of this new RAF fighter was totally unknown to the pilots of the Kanalgeschwader.

18 October

The 7th Staffel's Obfw. Jüppner and Ogfr. Abel flew a low-altitude evening recon mission to Dover. The Rotte suddenly encountered two patrol boats. While banking around them Abel lost control of his aircraft and crashed; he was the possible victim of anti-aircraft fire.

Oberst Galland visited the Geschwader. The purpose of the trip was not stated, but he was concerned about the apparent poor performance of his favorite fighter unit against the heavy bombers, and he undoubtedly needed to assure himself that Major Schöpfel had the situation under control.

Three pilots are known to have joined the Geschwader today from the Erg/JGr West. Lt. Winfried Wunder was assigned to the 7th Staffel; Uffz. Otto Glaser, to the 2nd Staffel; Uffz. Heinz Müller, to the 9th Staffel.



Lt. Paul Galland (KIA 31 Oct 42) relaxes outside the Wevelghem ready room. (*Vanackere*)

20 October

The 1st Staffel returned to Arques from Clairmarais.

21–23 October

Routine patrols and Alarmstarts were flown; no Allied aircraft were engaged.

24 October

Routine patrols and Alarmstarts were flown, without result. The 7th Staffel's Fw. Ellenrieder took part in the evening reconnaissance mission to the English coast.

25 October

Routine patrols were flown in the morning. At 1610 a large formation off Dunkirk caused the entire Geschwader to be ordered off the ground. The Allied force, Circus No. 232, did not cross the coast, but turned back owing to bad weather. The Second Gruppe was immediately landed, while the First and Third Gruppen patrolled in the Ostend-Dunkirk area until 1645.

The 9th Staffel transferred from Moorsele to Maldegheem.

26 October

Routine patrols and Alarmstarts were flown without encountering Allied aircraft.

27–30 October

The usual patrols were flown, but poor weather reduced the activity on the English side of the Channel. Hptm. Priller took advantage of the break in the action to schedule training missions and formation flights for his Third Gruppe.

Oblt. Josef Haiböck was ordered to JG 52 on the Eastern Front, and was succeeded as Kapitän of the 1st Staffel by Oblt. Franz Nels.



An 8th Staffel Schwarm, photographed by the Schwarmführer, Lt. Paul Galland. (*Matthiesen via Petrick*)



Another photograph of Lt. Paul Galland's Schwarm. (*Matthiesen via Petrick*)

31 October

In the continuing bad weather Bomber Command's No. 2 Group scheduled another of its infrequent low-level daylight Boston raids. At noon a dozen of the light bombers were dispatched in pairs to attack power stations in northern France. An 8th Staffel patrol was able to catch the two that had just bombed Comines, and Lt. Paul Galland shot one down, for his 17th victory in 107 combat sorties.

The First Gruppe and part of the Third Gruppe were grounded until late afternoon for a very unusual reason: bomb racks and bombs were being mounted beneath their FW 190A-4s. Adolf Hitler had ordered more attacks on England in retaliation for Bomber Command's night offensive. A full-strength daylight "Vergeltungsangriff" or vengeance attack had been planned for

Canterbury as soon as the right weather conditions prevailed. Unfortunately for the Luftflotte 3 planners, the only day bombers available in France were the FW 190A-4/U4s of the two Jabostaffeln, which had only nineteen serviceable aircraft between them. Thus forty-nine fighters were turned into bombers for the raid, which developed into the largest daylight attack on England since 1940. The attack was timed for dusk. II/JG 2 joined the Second Gruppe at Abbeville; the addition of part of the Third Gruppe brought the total number of escorts to sixty-two FW 190s. Six more fighters were detailed to fly a diversionary sweep.

The large fighter force roared across the Channel five feet above the waves, well beneath a cloud deck at 600 feet. Complete surprise was attained. The barrage balloons were raised swiftly and caused some fighters to drop their bombs prematurely. Uffz. Immervoll lost three feet of his wing to a balloon cable, but his was the only Jabo aircraft to sustain damage. Thirty-one bombs exploded in Canterbury, killing thirty-two people and damaging many buildings. The fighters wheeled about and returned to the coast as rapidly as they had arrived. The British fighter defenses, hampered by the low cloud cover, caught only one fighter over England. This was a II/JG 2 airplane, which was shot down; its pilot was captured.

One Geschwader pilot was lost on the return flight. Lt. Paul Galland and his wingman lost their unit among the many Focke-Wulfs in the low clouds. While nine miles from Calais Galland heard a German pilot calling for assistance. After flying two search curves he saw in the distance a FW 190 close above the water, pursued by a Spitfire. He went to the aid of the German pilot, the 1st Staffel's Lt. Beese, but the Spitfire pilot spotted him and pulled up sharply into the cloud deck. Galland entered a tight climbing turn, but stalled out, and had to dive away to regain flying speed. At that instant the Spitfire broke from the clouds in firing position and shot him down in flames; Galland's wingman Fw. Edmann immediately shot down the Spitfire. This combat was probably with a lone No. 91 Sqd. Spitfire that went missing at this time and location.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 11-31 October 1942

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
10/11/42	Uffz.	Hofmann W.	1	1	Spitfire	5km W of Cassel	3:40 PM	64 Sqd	unk
10/11/42	Uffz.	Bremer	3	1	Spitfire	15km SSE of Dunkirk	3:35 PM	64 Sqd	yes
10/11/42	Hptm.	Steindl	1 St	1	Spitfire	5km E of Dunkirk	3:35 PM	64 Sqd	yes
10/12/42	Uffz.	Fast	2	4	Spitfire	8km NNW of Cap Gris Nez			unk
10/15/42	Oblt.	Galland W-F.	5 CO	18	Spitfire	WNW of Fécamp	4:34 PM	122 Sqd	yes
10/31/42	Obfw.	Kierstein	2	3	Spitfire	5km W of Etaples		453 Sqd	yes
10/31/42	Lt.	Galland P.	8	17	Boston	Dixmuide/Comines	12:30 PM	107 Sqd	unk
10/31/42	Fw.	Edmann	8	1	Spitfire	20km W of Calais	6:15 PM	91 Sqd	unk

JG 26 Casualties: 17-31 October 1942

Date	Rank	Name	Cas	Unit	Aircraft	WNr	Mkgs	Place	Time	Cause
10/17/42	Fw.	Niesel, Karl	KIA	10(J)	FW 190A-4	2403	bk 14+ <bomb	S of Hastings	2:30 PM	Typhoon
10/18/42	Ogfr.	Abal, Hans	KIA	7	FW 190A-4	7052	wh 8	Dover-Ramsgate	6:20 PM	ship flak
10/31/42	Lt.	Galland, Paul	KIA	8	FW 190A-4	2402	bk 1	20km W of Calais	6:15 PM	Spitfire

1 November

Routine patrols and Alarmstarts were flown without encountering Allied aircraft.

Fw. Adolf Glunz was awarded the German Cross in Gold after his twenty-second air victory.

Two pilots joined the Geschwader from the Ergänzungsjagdgruppe West. Uffz. Gerhard Wiegand was assigned to the Third Gruppe; Uffz. Bruno Kühn, to the First.

During the month Obfw. Wilhelm Philipp and Oblt. Paul Steindl transferred from the Geschwader to JG 54, on the Eastern Front.

2 November

Routine patrols, Alarmstarts, and convoy escorts were flown in the morning. Hptm. Priller took advantage of the low level of activity to schedule a practice bomber attack mission for his men, using a Ju 88 to simulate a B-17.

At 1505 the Second Gruppe was scrambled on reports that Allied aircraft had crossed the coast on the deck, headed for Abbeville. This was the Biggin Hill Wing, flying a Rodeo. It turned and exited over Le Touquet before the Gruppe could get into position for an attack. The 6th Staffel's Uffz. Gerhard Vogt and his wingman, Uffz. Georg Granabetter, chased after the formation and caught a pair of isolated Spitfires from No. 611 Squadron. Vogt shot one down, but as he gained firing position on the second, Granabetter cut in front of him, taking a burst of Vogt's fire and crashing into the Channel. The second Spitfire went down also, and was credited to Granabetter.

Fw. Glunz landed at 1600 on the recall of the Second Gruppe. He remained at Sitzbereitschaft on Ligescourt and took off at 1649 after another Spitfire formation. He shot down a Spitfire, probably from No. 91 Squadron, off Berck sur Mer, and was down again at 1736.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 2 November 1942

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
11/2/42	Fw.	Glunz	4	23	Spitfire	W of Berck sur Mer	4:57 PM	91 Sqd	yes
11/2/42	Uffz.	Granabetter	6	1	Spitfire	SW of Boulogne	3:23 PM	611 Sqd	yes
11/2/42	Uffz.	Vogt	6	9	Spitfire	SW of Boulogne	3:24 PM	611 Sqd	unk

3 November

Routine patrols and Alarmstarts were flown without encountering Allied aircraft. Lt. Dietze made the evening recon flight to England.

4 November

The 8th Staffel's Uffz. Gerhard Wiegand was injured while making a forced landing on Arques after his engine failed.

Oblt. Paul Keller left the Jabostaffel and took over the 4th Staffel; Lt. Janda remained in the 4th Staffel as his deputy. Oblt. Kurt Müller replaced Keller as Kapitän of the Jabostaffel.

8 November

The Allies landed in northwestern Africa. The Germans were forced to defend this new front with fighter units taken from Western Europe – an early example of the fire-fighting tactics that would become routine in the overstretched Jagdwaffe. The two Bf 109G-equipped Staffeln, 11(Höhen)/JG 2 and



8th Staffel groundcrewmen with their pet raven, Jakob – Wevelghem, Autumn 1942. (G. Schmidt)

11(Höhen)/JG 26, were ordered to Tunisia immediately, along with the FW 190-equipped II/JG 2.

At 1108 two Allied formations were reported off Dunkirk. The First and Second Gruppen were scrambled, but the force contained only Spitfires, and no attack orders were issued. The Spitfires were on a two-Wing Rodeo, flown as a diversion for the next large formation, thirty-eight B-17s and fifteen squadrons of Spitfires making a return visit to the locomotive factory at Lille. The entire Geschwader was ordered up. The Second Gruppe got off the ground in time to avoid being bombed by another

diversionary force, this one of one dozen B-17s. The Focke-Wulfs climbed out to the west and returned in time to bounce the Abbeville force's top cover, which lost two Spitfires, and damage most of the B-17s.

The rest of the Geschwader attacked the Lille force continuously between the target and the coast. In contrast to the 9 October raid, six of the Spitfire squadrons were assigned as direct escort; as a result the bombers received much better protection today. Six Spitfires went down, although only three claims are known; III/JG 2 may have been involved in this battle. One of the victorious pilots was Oblt. Haiböck, whose departure for JG 52 had been delayed. One B-17 was damaged by the Lille flak and was then shot into the Channel by the fighters. This victory was awarded to Lt. Gerhard Seifert, the younger brother of the First Gruppe Kommandeur. Gerhard Schöpfel's personal records indicate that he claimed two B-17s on this day, but this is not confirmed by other documentation; he may have claimed Spitfires, or the date may be in error.

Two FW 190s force-landed during the day with light damage; one had a bad engine and the other had been hit by a Spitfire. No Luftwaffe fighters or pilots were lost.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 8 November 1942

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
11/8/42	Maj.	Schöpfel	Ge CO	43	B-17	unknown			unk
11/8/42	Maj.	Schöpfel	Ge CO	44	B-17	unknown			unk
11/8/42	Uffz.	Klems	I St	2	Spitfire	5km S of Merville			yes
11/8/42	Oblt.	Haiböck	1	15	Spitfire	5km N of Gravelines	12:15 PM		yes
11/8/42	Oblt.	Zink	2 CO	29	Spitfire	10km SE of Dover			yes
11/8/42	Lt.	Hoppe	6	2	Spitfire	SW of Gravelines	12:49 PM	421 Sqd	yes
11/8/42	Uffz.	Vogt	6	10	Spitfire	Calais-Marck road	12:51 PM	421 Sqd	yes
11/8/42	Lt.	Seifert G.	9	1	B-17	unknown	12:24 PM	306 BG	unk

9 November

The three Gruppen were scrambled at 1610 on reports of three formations off the coast. The Allied aircraft were all Spitfires, and no orders to attack them were issued. No. 611 Squadron had climbed to 30,000 feet, and was able to



Lt. Hans Hartigs' "black 9" in the 8th Staffel servicing area at Wevelghem. The airplane's crew chief was Uffz. Franz-Wilhelm Bauerhenne. Hartigs was taken prisoner on 26 December 1944. (Bauerhenne)

bounce two First Gruppe Staffeln at 25,000 feet over St. Omer, but no Focke-Wulf sustained recordable damage. One Spitfire pilot was wounded, but the Gruppe filed no claims.

10 November

Routine patrols and Alarmstarts were flown without encountering Allied aircraft.

14 November

10(Jabo)/JG 26 transferred to Marseilles-Istres, where it joined 10(Jabo)/JG 2 and I/JG 2 in supporting the German occupation of Vichy France and guarding against the possible invasion of southern France by the Allies. The two Jabo-

staffeln and a Bf 109 Staffel from the Erg/JGr West were formed into an *ad hoc* unit, Jabogruppe 226, and given the task of patrolling the Mediterranean for submarines. The aerial defense of the Channel coast was thus left to four Jagdgruppen: I/JG 26, II/JG 26, III/JG 26, and III/JG 2.

Gefr. Heinrich Heuser and Uffz. Heinz Münch joined the Geschwader from fighter training and were assigned to the First Gruppe.

15 November

11(Höhen)/JG 26 was subordinated to II/JG 51 in Tunisia, but half of the Staffel's ground crews never arrived; their Ju 52s were probably shot down by Beaufighters on the flight from Sicily. 11(Höhen)/JG 2 was already in North Africa, flying with II/JG 53.

16–18 November

Routine patrols and Alarmstarts were flown without encountering Allied aircraft.

19 November

Routine patrols and Alarmstarts were flown. Only one resulted in combat. The 9th Staffel scrambled from Maldeghem and was directed to intercept a squadron of Spitfires that had strafed the airfield at Flushing. Uffz. Edgar Dörre's wingman, Uffz. Heinz Müller, was trapped by Spitfires after some maneuvering and was shot down and killed. Dörre claimed one of the Spitfires, but all in fact escaped. The victorious unit was the 335th Squadron of the 4th Fighter Group, the sole American fighter unit remaining in England.

Adolf Galland was promoted to Generalmajor, giving him a rank equal to his position as General der Jagdflieger. At age thirty he was the youngest general in the Luftwaffe.

Uffz. Wolfgang Polster and Uffz. Hans Pritzke joined the Geschwader from fighter training and were assigned to the Third Gruppe.

21 November

The 4th Staffel transferred to II/JG 2's former base at Beaumont-le-Roger to help bolster the defenses of the Paris region.



A very youthful Uffz. Wolfgang Polster, who joined the 8th Staffel out of flight school in November 1942 and served in the Third Gruppe until he was wounded in February 1945. (*Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv*)

22 November

There was no sign of Allied air activity. The Geschwader filled the day with local and training flights. Uffz. Crump took part in the afternoon recon mission to England.

23 November

The Allied ULTRA code-breaking organization had quickly learned of the departure of two of JG 2's three Gruppen for the Mediterranean theater. VIII Bomber Command took advantage of the supposed weakening of the German defenses in western France to schedule a raid on the submarine base at St. Nazaire, far beyond the range of the Spitfire escorts. The arrival over Brittany of thirty-six unescorted B-17s and B-24s gave Hptm. Egon Mayer of III/JG 2 the perfect opportunity to test a new mode of attack that the Jafü 2 and Jafü 3 fighter commanders had been discussing for several weeks. The bombers were greeted on their bomb run by Mayer's Focke-Wulfs, attacking in Ketten of three aircraft from dead ahead. Four B-17s tumbled from the formation, victims of the Luftwaffe's most successful single pass through the heavies to date.

Adolf Galland, always ready to accept innovations, was quick to give the new tactic his blessing. In a memo sent to all Luftwaffe fighter units he made the following points:

1. The diving attack from the front by Hptm. Mayer was very effective, and resulted in the immediate destruction of a B-17.
2. His Nos. 2 and 3 were seriously damaged when they pulled up behind the formation after the attack. This is not recommended.
3. Hptm. Mayer's second attack was also successful. In this case he dove in front of a bomber, pulled up to make his attack, and dove away in a tight bank, climbing back up ahead of the formation. He received no defensive fire.
4. General conclusions:
 - a. Attacks from the rear on close formations are seldom successful and bring heavy losses. If necessary to attack from the rear, fire at engines and fuel tanks from a steep bank.
 - b. Attacks from the side can be effective. These require training and a good firing angle.
 - c. Frontal attacks at low speed from straight ahead, above, or below are the most effective of all attacks. Prerequisites for success are flying skill, good aim, and continuous fire up to the closest possible distance.

- d. Withdrawal is permitted only by a tight diving bank in the direction of flight of the attacked bomber. This maximizes the angular velocity and makes it impossible for the enemy gunners to draw the correct lead.
- e. It is essential that the fighter units attack repeatedly in great strength and mass. The defensive fire will then be dispersed and the bomber formation can be split apart.

24 November

Routine patrols and Alarmstarts were flown. Attacks were ordered on at least one of several Allied formations over the Pas de Calais, but no successes were obtained.

Lt. Klaus Kunze reported to the Geschwader and was assigned to the First Gruppe.

26 November

Lt. Gottfried Schmidt reported to the Geschwader and was assigned to the Third Gruppe.

27 November

A new, very unpopular task was added to the pilots' routine after receipt of a verbal Führerbefehl (Hitler order). The conventional fighter units were now to begin Terrorangriffe (terror attacks) on southern England. Purely civilian targets were to be strafed. Today a 5th Staffel Rotte was ordered to carry out the first of these missions, which were officially designated as Störangriffe, or harassment raids. The two aircraft attacked a railroad train on the Dungeness peninsula. Their cannon fire caused the locomotive to explode. One Focke-Wulf was struck by the debris and crashed, killing Obfw. Heinrich Bierwirth.

Routine patrols and Alarmstarts were flown. No attacks were ordered on the several Allied formations reported over the French coast. The ever-energetic Hptm. Priller had his Third Gruppe in the air, as usual; today they practiced attacking infantry and armor.

The 9th Staffel, temporarily under the leadership of Oblt. Otto Stammberger, transferred from Maldeghem to Beaumont-le-Roger, where it joined the 4th Staffel. The two Staffeln were placed under the Le Havre Jafü and replaced II/JG 2 as the principal defenders of Rouen and the approaches to Paris.

Replacement pilots arriving from the training units over the next few days included: Uffz. Walter Müller and Fhr. Heinrich Vanderveerd, who joined the First Gruppe, and Uffz. Alois Reichert, who joined the Third.

28 November

Allied air activity was nonexistent. Oblt. Stammberger took off from Octeville at noon and flew a Störangriff mission to attack English railroad targets. Uffz. Crump took part in the afternoon reconnaissance mission to the English coast.

29 November

There was little flying. Ogfr. Gomann took part in the morning reconnaissance mission to England.

30 November

Routine patrols and Alarmstarts were flown, but no attacks were ordered on



Gefreiter Heinrich Heuser, shortly after joining the 2nd Staffel in November. He remained with the Staffel until he was shot down by Allied antiaircraft fire in August 1944 and taken prisoner. (*Heuser via Roba*)

the Allied aircraft that were plotted in the area. The 2nd Staffel's Gefr. Heuser made his first Alarmstart, without incident. The 1st Staffel's Lt. Dietze made his last Alarmstart for some time; he had been ordered to Perpignan for a tour of instructor duty.

The 4th Staffel's Lt. Wilhelm Cadenbach and Lt. Roland Prym flew a Störangriff mission to Portland from Beaumont-le-Roger. Both were hit by ships' gunfire while attacking the harbor and crashed into the Channel. Oblt. Stammberger led two search missions without result. While returning from one of these searches Fw. Werner Kraft spotted a Hurricane, probably on an ASR mission of its own, and shot it down. Kraft's engine then failed, forcing him to ditch in the Channel. He was fortunate, and survived the ditching with only light injuries.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 19-30 November 1942

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
11/19/42	Uffz.	Dörre	9	3	Spitfire	10km N of Zeebrugge	2:58 PM	4 FG	unk
11/30/42	Fw.	Kraft	9	1	Hurricane	W of Brighton			unk

JG 26 Casualties: November 1942

Date	Rank	Name	Cas	Unit	Aircraft	WNr	Mkgs	Place	Time	Cause
11/2/42	Uffz.	Granabetter, Georg	KIA	6	FW 190A-4	656	br 3	Somme Estuary		Spitfire
11/4/42	Uffz.	Wiegand, Gerd	WIFA	8	FW 190A-4	682	bk 4	St Omer	1:00 PM	engine
11/8/42	Fw.	Kierstein, Paul	WIFA	2	FW 190A-3	2174		Arques		engine
11/19/42	Uffz.	Müller, Heinz	KIA	9	FW 190A-4	5623	yl 4	10km N of Zeebrugge	4:00 PM	Spitfire
11/27/42	Obfw.	Bierwirth, Heinrich	KIA	5	FW 190A-4	2400	bk 5	Rye-Folkestone	4:40 PM	RR explosion
11/30/42	Lt.	Prym, Roland	KIA	4	FW 190A-4	727	wh 10	SW of Portland		ship flak
11/30/42	Lt.	Cadenbuch, Wilhelm	KIA	4	FW 190A-4	5648	wh 1	SW of Portland		ship flak
11/30/42	Fw.	Kraft, Werner	WIFA	9	FW 190A-4	675		NW of Le Havre		engine

1 December

Convoy escorts and uneventful patrols took up the morning. In mid-afternoon the Biggin Hill Wing flew a Rodeo to St. Omer and attacked twenty FW 190s

from above, claiming 3-0-3. The German unit, probably the First Gruppe, sustained no losses.

Uffz. Richard Wittmann left the Jabostaffel today for duty as a test pilot at Rechlin. He had flown nineteen Jabo missions in his five months with the Staffel.

Fw. Hugo Dahmer rejoined the Geschwader during the month after his self-described exile in JG 5, but transferred to JG 2 a few weeks later.

2 December

Routine patrols and Alarmstarts were carried out. The 8th Staffel's Uffz. Polster flew a reception flight for returning Jabos and also made his first Alarmstart with the Geschwader; both were uneventful.

3 December

B-17s of the 12th Air Force bombed 11(Höhen)/JG 26's airfield outside Tunis, catching the entire unit on the ground. Six pilots – half the Staffel's strength – were killed. The Staffel was disbanded; its survivors reinforced the three Staffeln of II/JG 51.

4 December

The 5th Staffel's Ogfr. Gomann flew the morning recon mission to England, covering the coast from Brighton to Hastings. The rest of the Geschwader spent the morning on uneventful patrols. At 1410 the St. Pol Jafü scrambled the three Gruppen on reports that four formations were approaching the coast. These were RAF aircraft on Rodeo No. 115, a sweep of the Pas de Calais by twelve Spitfire squadrons. The all-Canadian Kenley Wing, flying its first mission as a wing, was having difficulty keeping formation, which is probably why it was the only unit seriously engaged. Many of the Spitfires' canopies had frosted up in the minus fifty-degree temperatures, and few of No. 401 Squadron's pilots, flying as top cover, saw Hptm. Seifert's Focke-Wulfs dive through them over Marquise to attack No. 402 Squadron just as the wing turned at the end of its sweep. The Spitfires scattered in all directions, and before re-forming over Boulogne and withdrawing to England were attacked by Focke-Wulfs from the other Gruppen. The pilots of the Geschwader claimed seven Spitfires; six of these claims were confirmed. The Canadians lost five Spitfires and three pilots; the only loss to the Geschwader was the damage one Third Gruppe FW 190 sustained while landing on Wevelghem with a blown tire.

The two JG 26 Staffeln at Beaumont-le-Roger were scrambled by the Le Havre Jafü as a reserve force, but were not engaged.

Uffz. Karl Weiss reported in from a training unit and was assigned to the 8th Staffel. Fw. Erich Jauer rejoined the Geschwader after sixteen months as a factory test pilot, having waged a successful battle to regain his status as a combat pilot. He spent the night at Geschwader headquarters in Wizernes.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 4 December 1942

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
12/4/42	Maj.	Seifert	I CO	42	Spitfire	near Calais	2:52 PM	401+402 Sqd	yes
12/4/42	Lt.	Uiberacker	G. 1	7	Spitfire	5km E of Boulogne	2:47 PM	401+402 Sqd	yes
12/4/42	Lt.	Dippel	2	9	Spitfire	Tilques	2:45 PM	401+402 Sqd	unk
12/4/42	Oblt.	Hermichen	3 CO	19	Spitfire	10km NE of Desvres	2:34 PM	401+402 Sqd	yes
12/4/42	Oblt.	Galland	W-F. 5 CO	19	Spitfire	20km NW of Boulogne	2:55 PM	401+402 Sqd	yes

12/4/42	Maj.	Priller	III CO	79	Spitfire	20km E of Dover	2:40 PM	401+402 Sqd	yes
12/4/42	Fw.	Grünlinger	III St	2	Spitfire	20km E of Dover	2:40 PM	401+402 Sqd	yes

5 December

The 5th Staffel's Uffz. Crump flew the morning recon mission to England. The Geschwader spent the day on routine patrols and training flights.



The irrepressible Lt. Hans-Georg Dippel, posing outside a St. Omer bunker in a "war booty" British helmet. (Heuser via Roba)

6 December

The morning reconnaissance flight, comprising the 6th Staffel's Lt. Wenzel and Uffz. Vogt, surprised a pair of No. 91 Sqd. Spitfires engaged in the same task and shot both down. A little later the 6th Staffel continued its harassment of the English coast with a mission so successful that it made the daily OKW communiqué. The Störangriffe were now being flown by Schwärme rather than Rotten to reduce their vulnerability. The lead Rotte, Obfw. Mackenstedt and Obfw. Kruska, exploded a Dover ammunition bunker before anti-aircraft fire dispersed the Schwarm. The two pilots then attacked an airfield on the southern coast, while the second Rotte, Lt. Hoppe and Uffz. Mayer, strafed the Rye barracks.

The Geschwader was scrambled at 1100 on reports of Allied activity over the Somme Estuary. Eventually three formations were plotted, comprising a B-24 force and its scattered escort, all headed for Abbeville-Drucat. The Spitfire wing leader ordered the mission aborted owing to the poor formation, but six bombers pressed on and bombed the airfield. The Second Gruppe interceptors attacked the B-24s over Abbeville. No B-24s fell immediately. A later attack by the First Gruppe was able to bring one of the bombers down, but at a cost. The Liberators succeeded in hitting back. The 1st Staffel's Ogfr. Erich Eschke made a lone attack on the B-24 formation from the rear but was struck by gunfire and killed; Lt. Friedrich Graf von Uiberacker was shot down into the Somme Estuary and sank with his aircraft. Two Spitfires were claimed by Geschwader formation leaders, but no RAF losses are known.

The main VIII Bomber Command attack force appeared on German radar an hour later, after the Geschwader pilots had had ample time to land for refueling and rearming. Sixty-six B-17s took off to bomb the Lille steel works, escorted or supported by six Spitfire wings. Few of the Spitfire pilots saw any German aircraft, but the B-17 crews did. Only thirty-six bombers dropped their explosives in the vicinity of the target, owing to cloud cover, enemy attack, and a variety of mechanical problems. The three Pas de Calais Gruppen all attacked

the bombers. Oblt. Stammberger also led his 9th Staffel over from Beaumont-le-Roger and attempted a head-on attack, but hit nothing. One B-17 went down under attack by fighters, possibly from II/JG 1, which was under Jafü 2's control for the day and claimed two B-17s. Major Schöpfel may have been another participant in this attack. He was the only JG 26 pilot to claim a B-17, but his records are maddeningly vague as to details; this is a shame, because his claim today, his 45th, proved to be his last of the war. Seven B-17s returned to England with damage inflicted by the fighters. Uffz. Crump followed the first escort wing back over the Channel and downed a No. 122 Sqd. Spitfire.

After the battle First Gruppe pilots searched the Somme Estuary for von Uiberacker, without success. The Second Gruppe was scrambled again on reports of Allied aircraft, but landed a half hour later. Fw. Erich Jauer reported to the Third Gruppe at Wevelghem, where he joined Hptm. Mietusch's 7th Staffel.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 6 December 1942

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
12/6/42	Maj.	Schöpfel	Ge CO	45	B-17	unknown		305 BG	unk
12/6/42	Oblt.	Hermichen	3 CO	20	Spitfire	20km W of Le Treport	11:37 AM		yes
12/6/42	Uffz.	Schnell	3	1	B-24	35km W of Etaples	11:44 AM	44 BG	yes
12/6/42	Uffz.	Crump	5	2	Spitfire	15km NW of Calais	12:42 PM	122 Sqd	yes
12/6/42	Lt.	Wenzel	6	2	Spitfire	8km W of Dieppe	8:35 AM	91 Sqd	yes
12/6/42	Uffz.	Vogt	6	11	Spitfire	10km W of Dieppe	8:36 AM	91 Sqd	yes
12/6/42	Maj.	Priller	III CO	80	Spitfire	5km S of Lille	12:10 PM		yes

7 December

The 1st Staffel's Fw. Franz Hiller took part in the morning recon mission to England, and shot down a Spitfire six miles northwest of Calais. The 1st Staffel also flew the noon Störangriff mission to the English coast. The Schwarm encountered bad weather and was split up. Ogfr. Willi Muskatewitz hit a low hill near Hastings, possibly after taking a hit from light anti-aircraft fire, and was killed. On the return flight Ogfr. Horst Gauss ran out of fuel and was injured when he force-landed near Berck.

At noon an unidentified alert Rotte took off to pursue a pair of low-flying Mosquitos, but had no success. In mid-afternoon the 5th Staffel scrambled from Abbeville on reports of Allied aircraft over the Somme Estuary; the pilots were not ordered to attack. The 9th Staffel was up from Beaumont-le-Roger, probably after the same target. A little later the 3rd Staffel's Uffz. Heinrich Schnell claimed a Spitfire north of Berck, ending the combat flying for the day.

9 December

Routine patrols and Alarmstarts were flown, without success. The 1st Staffel's Uffz. Wilhelm Hofmann force-landed north of Watten after his engine failed. He suffered severe injuries that kept him in the hospital for several months.

10 December

The 6th Staffel's Uffz. Mayer took part in the afternoon recon mission, covering the English coast from Dungeness to Dover. A few patrols and Alarmstarts were flown, without result.

A new 11th Staffel was established in the Third Gruppe at Wevelghem, under

the command of Lt. Paul Schauder. There is some evidence that Major Schöpfel intended the unit to function as an Endausbildungsstaffel, or operational training squadron. Replacement pilots were now arriving from sources other than the Erg/JGr West, and were not prepared for conditions on the Channel Front. Whatever Schöpfel's plan may have been, the Staffel lost any distinct character it may have had as a training unit after it was thrown into battle in early 1943. Although the 11th Staffel often operated independently of the rest of the Gruppe, none of its few survivors remembers any special designation or role.

11 December

The 5th Staffel's Uffz. Crump and Ogfr. Gomann paired up for the morning recon flight, covering the English coast from Dover to Hastings. At noon a 3rd Staffel Schwarm attacked the English coast. A pair of patrolling No. 401 Sqd. Spitfires was vectored onto the Focke-Wulfs and caught them four miles off Hastings, flying 200 feet off the water. The aircraft of Uffz. Bruno Kühn was hit hard, and both sides thought it had crashed, but it staggered off to the south, spewing black smoke. Kühn attempted to land on the French coast, but the airplane went out of control and crashed, killing him. The RAF and the Luftwaffe sent out patrols to search for the missing pilot. The 3rd Staffel's Fw. Willius shot up an ASR Defiant and claimed its destruction, but the claim was not confirmed; the Defiant in fact escaped.

12 December

Ogfr. Gomann was up early to escort rescue launches in the Channel; his flight was uneventful. At 1042 the St. Pol Jafü sent a patrol to Ostend to investigate aircraft that turned out to be German. American radio traffic indicated a heavy bomber raid would be forthcoming, and by 1100 the air over the Channel was thick with Allied formations. VIII Bomber Command had scheduled a raid on the important aircraft supply park at Romilly-sur-Seine, southeast of Paris and thus well beyond escort range. A number of sweeps and diversions were planned in order to keep JG 26 occupied. Most of these formations, including twelve B-24s that failed to bomb Abbeville-Drucat owing to continuous cloud cover, were not engaged, although all units of the Geschwader were in the air. As the Hornchurch Wing was recrossing the coast No. 350 Squadron was attacked by the First Gruppe; one Spitfire was shot down, and a second reached England with serious damage. Gefr. Heinrich Heuser took part in this attack, and was credited with his first combat sortie.

The main bomber formation crossed the French coast east of Dieppe shortly before noon and headed south. The Pas de Calais units were scrambled but quickly landed to await the bombers' return. Oblt. Stammberger's 9th Staffel took off from Beaumont-le-Roger at 1151 and followed the bombers until the last of the Spitfires had turned back. The Focke-Wulfs then made their attack. Stammberger's own guns jammed, but his Staffel shot down two B-17s and damaged a number of others. The bombardiers were unable to see the target owing to cloud, and part of the formation bombed Rouen on the return flight. The Second Gruppe scrambled from Drucat and climbed out over the Somme Estuary to attack the returning bombers. Their initial pass succeeded in damaging a few more B-17s, but they were then driven off by three wings of Spitfires arriving to escort the bombers back to England. The subsequent dogfights cost the RAF three Spitfires. Although there are problems in the German records



Fw. Erich Jauer beside a "Würger" (butcher bird), the unofficial nickname of the Focke-Wulf 190. (Jauer)

as to the times of the claims, it is probable that these three fighters were downed by the 5th Staffel's Oblt. Wutz Galland and two of his pilots, Uffz. Crump and Ogfr. Gomann. The First Gruppe joined the battle as it was winding down, but filed no claims; Gefr. Heuser was given credit for his second combat sortie. Part of Hptm. Priller's Gruppe was up from Wevelghem, but was kept in reserve and did not make contact.

Although bombing results were poor, the Allied commanders felt that their defensive plan had worked well. The B-17 crews claimed 19-8-2 fighters, while the Spitfire pilots claimed 4-1-7. JG 2's losses, if any, are unknown, but JG 26 lost no pilots and sustained no reportable damage to its FW 190s.

10(Jabo)/JG 2 returned to Beaumont-le-Roger from southern France. Jabogruppe 226 was disbanded, but 10(Jabo)/JG 26 remained at Istres briefly, operating under KG 6.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 7–12 December 1942

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
12/7/42	Fw.	Hiller	1	1	Spitfire	10km NW of Calais	8:35 AM	91 Sqd	yes
12/7/42	Uffz.	Schnell	3	2	Spitfire	6km N of Berck	5:15 PM		yes
12/11/42	Fw.	Willius	3	23	Defiant	3km E of Dungeness	12:15 PM	277 Sqd	unk
12/12/42	Oblt.	Zink	2 CO	30	Spitfire	near Marquise	11:40 AM	350 Sqd	yes
12/12/42	Fw.	Willius	3	24	Spitfire	15km S of Simmereux	11:43 AM	350 Sqd	unk
12/12/42	Oblt.	Galland W-F.	5 CO	20	Spitfire	NW of Boulogne	11:39 AM	331+412 Sqd	yes
12/12/42	Uffz.	Crump	5		Spitfire	20km N Dieppe	11:30 AM	331+412 Sqd	no
12/12/42	Ogfr.	Gomann	5	1	Spitfire	20km NNW of Dieppe	1:44 PM	331+412 Sqd	yes
12/12/42	Uffz.	Schwarz	9	1	B-17	50km S of Paris	12:15 PM	303 BG	yes
12/12/42	Uffz.	Lühs	9	1	B-17	SE of Paris	12:35 PM	303 BG	yes

13 December

Patrols and Alarmstarts resulted in several engagements, but no victory claims. Two Third Gruppe FW 190s made forced landings with damaged engines after combat flights; it is unknown whether the damage was the result of combat.

14 December

Ogfr. Gomann flew the morning recon mission, covering the English coast from Hastings to Dungeness. The St. Pol and Le Havre Jafü kept their fighters busy with shipping and defensive patrols, although bad weather kept the Allies on their side of the Channel.

15 December

The 1st Staffel's Uffz. Josef Zirngibl took part in the afternoon recon flight, and encountered British fighters patrolling off Ramsgate. He shot one down, claiming a Brewster Buffalo. This was actually a Hawker Typhoon from No. 609 Squadron. This was the first victory over this type by the Geschwader; both sides would continue to have trouble identifying Typhoons in the air.

This period of reduced aerial activity was used to introduce the Second and Third Gruppen to new equipment – the Bf 109G-4. The Second Gruppe's Uffz. Meyer and Ogfr. Gomann each made several training flights in the "Gustav" on this day. The FW 190 was now in great demand on all of the Luftwaffe's widespread combat fronts, for reconnaissance and ground attack duties as well as in its original air superiority role, and was in chronic short supply. It seemed

logical to someone in the Luftwaffe High Command for the two Kanalschwader to give up their Focke-Wulfs in favor of the latest model Bf 109, which was in its element above 30,000 feet, even though the Höhenstaffeln had not had much success with their Bf 109G-1s and the pilots of Fighter Command (who weren't polled) certainly felt that the FW 190 was a much more dangerous opponent. The Second Gruppe was scheduled to re-equip with the Bf 109G in early 1943, but apparently Hptm. Conny Meyer and his successor as Kommandeur, Hptm. Wutz Galland, succeeded in stalling until the order was rescinded. By late spring 1943 the Third Gruppe would be flying Messerschmitts exclusively, while the Second Gruppe exchanged the few that they had received for more of their beloved Focke-Wulfs.

The Bf 109G-4 was based on the G-1, but lacked the earlier fighter's complicated pressurization system. It retained the DB 605A engine, which had introduced nitrous oxide (GM1) injection as a means of temporarily boosting engine power at altitude, and was equipped with the now-standard FuG 17Z radio. The Bf 109G-4 was an excellent dogfighter, especially at high altitudes, and could have played a useful role as high cover, taking on the Allied escort fighters. However, the Luftwaffe had too few fighters in the West to employ them in such limited specialist roles, and was thus forced to use the Bf 109 and FW 190 units interchangeably. The Bf 109G-4's standard armament of two MG 17 machine guns and one MG 151/20 machine cannon was too light to do much damage to B-17s and B-24s. The Bf 109 was also notorious for its light construction. All in all, the FW 190 was a much more survivable aircraft, and was the mount preferred by most of the experienced western Jagdflieger in 1942 and 1943.

16 December

Uffz. Crump and Ogfr. Gomann's 5th Staffel Schwarm took part in a Störangriff mission of the type that never appeared in the daily OKW communiqué. Peter Crump recalled that the Schwarm strafed the hotels on the beach front while crossing the coast, and then fired on anything seen moving – men, farm animals, and vehicles. He considered these missions to be a pathetic waste of men and resources. In the absence of Allied air activity, the Geschwader spent the day on routine duties – patrols, test flights, and training.

17–18 December

Routine patrols were flown. Allied air activity was plotted over the Channel, but no contact was made.

10(Jabo)/JG 26 returned from southern France to St. Omer-Wizernes. It was placed under the First Gruppe for administration and operations.

19 December

The Jabostaffel lost Oblt. Kurt Müller, its Kapitän, on its first mission since returning to the Kanalfront. His Focke-Wulf was hit by anti-aircraft fire from a ship east of Dover, and was then attacked by a patrolling Typhoon. Müller and his aircraft crashed on English soil. During its period on operations in 1942 10(Jabo)/JG 26 suffered the highest casualties of any JG 26 Staffel. It lost nine pilots killed (including one Kapitän) and two taken prisoner (including another Kapitän). An escorting First Gruppe Focke-Wulf was damaged by another Typhoon, but succeeded in reaching St. Omer. The 3rd Staffel's Oblt.

Hermichen claimed an "American fighter", probably yet another example of a misidentified Typhoon, although none were lost.

Hptm. Werner Patz, the Geschwader adjutant, transferred to the new 11th Staffel as a prospective Kapitän. He was succeeded by Hptm. Hösl, previously the Chef of the First Gruppe Stabskompanie. Hösl would retain his position as Geschwader adjutant for the remainder of the war.

Uffz. Hermann Butzmann reported to the Geschwader from a training unit and was assigned to the 4th Staffel.

20 December

VIII Bomber Command staged its largest raid since Lille. One hundred and one B-17s and B-24s returned to Romilly-sur-Seine. Unfortunately for the Americans, their mission plan was a near-duplicate of the 12th, and the defenders were ready. Four diversionary sweeps of the Pas de Calais by Fighter Command brought the Geschwader into the air, and desultory contact was made with one Spitfire wing, but the main Allied force had already been detected over the Channel, headed for Fécamp. Some of the Focke-Wulfs were landed for quick servicing, while most flew down the coast toward Dieppe. The Second and Third Gruppen were the first to arrive and paralleled the bomber formation until 1155, when the Spitfire escort turned back. The fighters immediately hit the 91st Bomb Group from dead ahead. Two B-17s went down over Rouen. The 91st Group then endured one hour of continuous combat, without further loss. The three Gruppen of JG 26 attacked in relays until low fuel forced them to break off. The 9th Staffel scrambled from Beaumont-le-Roger and reached the bombers in the Paris region, along with part of Hptm. Egon Mayer's III/JG 2. Oblt. Stammberger's pilots had their second opportunity to employ the head-on method of attack and flew a very successful mission. One B-17 was seen by Stammberger to flip end-for-end before its tail section broke off and the bomber began its last dive. Stammberger's own target began shaking and shuddering under the fire of his guns. As he started a second head-on pass its crew began bailing out at short intervals; eventually there were nine parachutes hanging in the bright blue sky. The 4th Staffel, which had flown an early mission from Beaumont-le-Roger in response to the sweeps and had landed for refueling, was the last fresh formation to reach the bombers, and shot a B-17 into the Channel off Dieppe. Fw. Glunz's aircraft was hit in the fuselage, but he was able to complete the mission. Geschwader fighters on their second sortie began to arrive from the Pas de Calais just as the return escort was spotted over the Channel; after a few inconclusive engagements, both sides retired to their bases.

Six B-17s went down over France, and thirty-one sustained combat damage. Initial American claims of fifty-three German fighters destroyed were later reduced to twenty-one. JG 26 claimed five B-17s and lost one plane and pilot; the 1st Staffel's Fw. Heinz-Günther Adam stalled out while trying to land on Drucat and crashed. JG 2 claimed three victories and lost two pilots killed. Many fighters ran out of fuel in the prolonged engagement. Their pilots' radioed reports of forced landings were interpreted by Allied intelligence as evidence of widespread combat damage to the German formations, corroborating the bomber crews' claims; most of these reports referred instead to routine dead stick landings. Only six German fighters are believed to have been damaged beyond repair, while eleven others survived their forced landings with slight to moderate damage.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 15–20 December 1942

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
12/15/42	Uffz.	Zirngibl	1	1	Buffalo	2km E of Dover	3:57 PM	609 Sqd	yes
12/19/42	Oblt.	Hermichen	3 CO	21	US fighter	25km ESE of Deal	2:14 PM	609 Sqd	yes
12/20/42	Hptm.	Meyer K-H.	II CO	11	B-17	6km SW of Mantes	12:11 PM	91 BG	yes
12/20/42		4. Staffel	4	2	B-17	20km W of Dieppe	1:50 PM	303 BG	yes
12/20/42	Maj.	Priller	III CO	81	B-17	Bay of Seine	12:01 PM	91 BG	unk
12/20/42	Uffz.	Niese	9	2	B-17	10km W of Châteaubleau	12:53 PM	306 BG	unk
12/20/42	Lt.	Stammberger	9	3	B-17	5km NW of Meaux	1:05 PM	306 BG	unk

21 December

General Galland published a set of tactical regulations prescribing the methods of attack on heavy bombers. The preferred method was now to be from the front. Fighter units were to fly on a course parallel to and on one side of the bombers until about three miles ahead of them. They were then to turn in by Schwärme and attack head-on. They were to aim at the bombers' cockpits, open fire at 900 yards, and maintain a near-level course, passing above their target after ceasing fire. The second approved attack method was from the rear. Concentrated attacks were specified; the fighters were to attack by Schwärme in rapid succession and at high speed, and pass over the bombers after ceasing fire.

In Galland's mind, one key to success with these tactics was for the fighters to maintain formation, or at least visual contact, in order to permit repeated concentrated attacks. Keeping position above the bombers was essential – and yet, from now until the end of the war, the German pilot's favorite method of ending an attack from either front or rear was with a split-S, which left him far beneath the attacked formation, and alone. Many pilots facing the hailstorm of defensive fire felt an irresistible urge to break off their attacks too soon. Although the bombers' guns did not bring down many German fighters, their streams of .50 inch tracers did in fact form an extremely effective defensive shield. Despite Galland's wishes, German formation attacks were rarely carried out exactly as prescribed. Some pilots would invariably break away prematurely, and the rest would pass through the bomber formation at whatever angle and orientation promised the best chance for survival. The formation leaders found it difficult to reassemble the scattered fighters, and each successive attack could be counted on for no greater than half the strength of the one preceding it.

The experienced Kanalfront fighter commanders soon made a slight modification to the new regulations. On 20 December most attacks had been made from dead ahead – twelve o'clock level, as viewed from the bombers. The bombers were in effective firing range for only a fraction of a second at the closing speed of 550 mph, and the flat angle of attack and the high altitude made range estimation extremely difficult. Pilots could not keep the possibility of collision from their minds, and many broke off their attacks far too soon. After experimentation, the optimum attack angle was found to be from dead ahead as before, but from ten degrees above the horizontal. A constant angle of fire could be maintained, similar to that practiced often against ground targets. The proper lead was attained by keeping the Revi's crosshairs on the nose of the bomber. Distance estimation was simplified, and even the less experienced pilots could score hits. Thus was born the form of attack most feared by bomber crews – from twelve o'clock high.

Jabo missions, escorts, and local flights were on today's schedule for the pilots

of the Geschwader. The 7th Staffel's Lt. Winfried Wunder was killed when he lost control in clouds on a test flight from Wevelghem.

A draft of replacement pilots arrived from the Erg/JGr West over the next few days and were assigned as follows: First Gruppe: Lt. Heinrich Beer, Uffz. Wolf-Dieter Glahn; Second Gruppe: Lt. Hans Fischer, Lt. Hans-Günter Lörzer; 11th Staffel: Uffz. Ludwig Lentz. Obfw. Hermann Hoffmann rejoined the Geschwader after four months of instructor duty and was assigned to the 11th Staffel.

JG 26 Casualties: December 1942

Date	Rank	Name	Cas	Unit	Aircraft	WNr	Mkgs	Place	Time	Cause
12/6/42	Ogfr.	Eschke, Erich	KIA	1	FW 190A-4	683	wh 6	NW of Ault		B-24
12/6/42	Lt.	Uiberacker, F. Graf von	KIA	1	FW 190A-4	5607	wh 7	W of Etaples		B-17
12/7/42	Ogfr.	Muskatewitz, Willi	KIA	1	FW 190A-4	5609	wh 7	Friston, Sussex	12:50 PM	hit hill
12/7/42	Ogfr.	Gauss, Horst	WIFA	1	FW 190A-4	7042		8km E of Berck		no fuel
12/9/42	Uffz.	Hofmann, Wilhelm	WIFA	1	FW 190A-4	5617		5km N of Watten		engine
12/11/42	Uffz.	Kühn, Bruno	KIA	3	FW 190A-4	7028	yl 10	Channel/cr nr Hardingham		Spitfire
12/19/42	Oblt.	Müller, Kurt	KIA	10(J)CO	FW 190A-4	712	wh 9	ENE of Deal	3:12 PM	flak+ Typhoon
12/20/42	Lt.	Adam, Heinz-Günther	KIA	1	FW 190A-4	730	wh 5	Abbeville a/f		landing
12/21/42	Lt.	Wunder, Winfred	KIFA	7	FW 190A-4	2437	wh 6	near Courtrai		crashed

22 December

Routine patrols, Alarmstarts, and Jabo missions were flown. Allied aircraft were active over the Channel, and a few small formations penetrated inland, but no attacks were ordered by the controllers.

23 December

Ogfr. Gomann took part in the morning recon mission, flying along the English coast from Hastings to Dungeness. Routine patrols were flown in response to Allied activity over the Channel and the French coast. All but one flight was uneventful. While Uffz. Heinrich Schnell's 3rd Staffel Schwarm was east of Dover, probably returning from a Störangriff mission, it encountered a lone British fighter. Schnell identified it as a Vultee Vanguard and shot it down. The "Vanguard" was probably a No. 609 Sqd. Typhoon, which disappeared today in this location.

25 December

Genmaj. Galland and Hptm. Horten flew over from Berlin to celebrate Christmas with the Third Gruppe at Wevelghem.

29 December

Fighter Command Spitfire wings flew several sweeps to northern France above thick, continuous clouds. The St. Pol Jafü scrambled a few Staffeln, but neither side was able to find the other.

30 December

A few interception patrols were flown, without result.

Fw. Heinz Kemethmüller transferred into the Geschwader from 8/JG 3 on the Russian Front, and was assigned to the 9th Staffel. Kemethmüller was a Knight's Cross winner with over fifty-nine victories.

31 December

Fighter Command again sent several sweeps to the Pas de Calais. Oblt. Wutz Galland's 5th Staffel spotted the Spitfires of No. 306 Squadron through a break in the clouds and made a successful bounce. Two of the Polish Spitfires went down, although only one was claimed.

JG 26 Victory Claims: 23-31 December 1942

Date	Rank	Name	Unit	Cl #	Aircraft	Place	Time	Opponent	Conf
12/23/42	Uffz.	Schnell	3	3	Vanguard	2km E of Dover	11:20 AM	609 Sqd	yes
12/31/42	Oblt.	Galland	W-F. 5 CO	21	Spitfire	NNW of Somme Estuary	2:45 PM	306 Sqd	unk

GLOSSARY

1. ABBREVIATIONS

ASR: Air-Sea Rescue.
CO: commanding officer.
e/a: enemy aircraft.
FAA: Fleet Air Arm.
IFF: Identification – Friend from Foe.
NCO; non-commissioned officer.
POW: prisoner of war.
PRU: photo reconnaissance unit.
RAAF: Royal Australian Air Force.
RAF: Royal Air Force.
RCAF: Royal Canadian Air Force.
RNZAF: Royal New Zealand Air Force.
SAAF: South African Air Force.
USAAF: US Army Air Force.
VIII BC: VIII Bomber Command, US 8th Air Force.

2. AVIATION TERMS

(#-#): (destroyed-damaged) aircraft losses.
(#-#-#): (destroyed-probable-damaged) aircraft claims.
Lufbery: a defensive formation in which two or more aircraft follow each other in a circle for mutual protection. Used loosely for any circling combat.
Split-S: a half-roll followed by a dive; results in a reversal of direction and the loss of a great deal of altitude. A common means of breaking off combat.
Vic: a vee-shaped formation of three aircraft.

3. GERMAN TERMS

Abschuss: “shootdown” – an air victory.
Alarmstart: scramble; a rapid takeoff for an intercept mission.
Blitzkrieg: “lightning war” – the highly mobile form of warfare practiced by the Wehrmacht between 1939 and 1941 – featured close cooperation between armored and air forces.
Einsatzfreude: love of combat.
Einsatzstaffel: operational Staffel (of a training unit).
Endausbildungsstaffel: operational training squadron.
Ergänzungsgruppe (ErgGr): advanced training group.
Ergänzungsstaffel (ErgSt): advanced training squadron.
Erprobungsgruppe (EprGr): operational test group.
Erprobungsstaffel (EprSt): operational test squadron.

Experte: a fighter pilot proficient in aerial combat; the Allied “ace”.

Fliegerführer (Flifü): aircraft command/control unit or its commander. In isolated theaters, the theater air commander.

Fliegerkorps (FK): air corps – a higher command containing several types of aircraft.

Flugzeugführer: pilot.

freie Jagd: “free hunt” – a fighter sweep without ground control.

Führer: leader.

Führungsstaffel: leader’s squadron.

Führungsverband: lead formation.

General der Jagdflieger (GdJ): General of the Fighter Arm; a staff position in the RLM. Werner Mölders and Adolf Galland were the most prominent holders of the position.

Geschwader: wing (pl. **Geschwader**) – the largest mobile, homogeneous Luftwaffe flying unit.

Geschwaderkommodore: wing commodore – usually a Major, Oberstleutnant, or Oberst in rank.

Gruppe (Gr): group (pl. **Gruppen**) – the basic Luftwaffe combat and administrative unit.

Gruppenkommandeur: group commander – usually a Hauptmann, Major, or Oberstleutnant in rank.

Herausschuss: “shoot-out” (cull) – to damage a bomber sufficiently to separate it from its formation.

Holzauge: “woodeneye” – a spotter; the last airplane or the top cover unit of a formation.

Horrido: hunters’ or pilots’ cry of victory. St. Horridus was the patron saint of hunters and fighter pilots.

Jabostaffel: fighter-bomber squadron.

Jäger: originally, a hunter – now, also, a fighter pilot.

Jagdbomber (Jabo): fighter-bomber.

Jagdflieger: fighter pilot(s).

Jagdfliegerführer (Jafü): fighter command/control unit(s) or its commander. The Jafü originated as administrative units, but quickly evolved into operational control units.

Jagdgeschwader (JG): fighter wing, commanding three or four Gruppen. The authorized strength of the JG 26 day fighter units averaged 124 during 1940-1942.

Jagdgruppe (JGr): fighter group, containing three or four Staffeln. The authorized strength of a JG 26 Gruppe totalled 40 during 1941-1942.

Jagdschutz: “fighter protection” – generally, a patrol of a front section, rather than an escort mission.

Jagdstaffel: fighter squadron, containing twelve aircraft (three Schwärme of four aircraft).

Jagdwaaffe: fighter arm or fighter force.

Kampfgeschwader (KG): bomber wing.

Kanalgeschwader: the Geschwader serving on the English Channel (JG 2 and JG 26).

Kanaljäger: fighter pilot(s) based near the Channel.

Kapitän: “captain”; a command position rather than a rank. (pl. **kapitäne**)

Katschmarek: a slang term for wingman – originally a derogatory term for a dim-witted infantry recruit.

Kette: flight of three aircraft.

Kommandeur: “commander”; a command position rather than a rank.

Kommodore: “commodore”; a command position rather than a rank.

Luftflotte (LF): air fleet; corresponded to a numbered American Air Force.

Luftwaffe: “Air Force” – refers to the German Air Force.

Oberkommando der Luftwaffe (OKL): the Luftwaffe High Command.

Oberkommando der Wehrmacht (OKW): the (German) Armed Forces High Command.

Reich: “empire” – Hitler’s Germany was “the Third Reich”.

Reichsluftfahrtministerium (RLM): German Air Ministry; Goering’s headquarters, it controlled all aspects of German aviation.

Rotte: tactical element of two aircraft.

Rottenflieger: wingman; the second man in a Rotte.

Rottenführer: leader of an element of two aircraft.

Schlageter: JG 26’s honor title; commemorated Albert Leo Schlageter.

Schnellkampfgeschwader (SKG): fast bomber wing (contained Bf 110, Bf 109, or FW 190 fighter-bombers).

Schwarm: flight of four aircraft (pl. **Schwärme**); in 1940-1942 German fighter formations were made up of units of Schwärme.

Schwarmführer: flight leader.

Sitzbereitschaft: “seated readiness” – cockpit readiness; the highest form of alert, with pilots seated in their cockpits for immediate takeoff.

Sitzkrieg: “sitting war” – the “phony war” in western Europe between September 1939 and April 1940.

Stab: staff.

Stabsschwarm: staff flight.

Staffel (St): squadron (pl. **Staffeln**).

Staffelführer: squadron leader (temporary or probationary).

Staffelkapitän: squadron leader – usually a Leutnant, Oberleutnant, or Hauptmann.

Störangriff: see Störungsangriff.

Störungsangriff: harassing attack or nuisance raid.

Stukageschwader (StG): dive-bomber wing.

Wehrmacht: armed forces – refers to the German Armed Forces.

Werkenummer (W.Nr.): aircraft serial number.

Vorkommando: advance unit – comprised selected ground personnel who were sent ahead of a transferring unit to prepare its new base for operations.

Zerstörer: “destroyer” (heavy fighter) – Bf 110 or Me 410 twin-engined fighter.

Zerstörergeschwader (ZG): heavy fighter wing.

Zerstörergruppe (ZGr): heavy fighter group.

APPENDIX I

JG 26 ORGANIZATION AND STRENGTH 1939-1942

Unit	A/C Type	A/C			Pilots			
		Est	On Str	Serv	Est	Pres	Avail	Ltd Duty
8 Jan 1939								
I. Gruppe	Bf 109E-1	39	24	(24)	39	39	34	5
	Bf 109B		19	(19)				
II. Gruppe	Bf 109E-1	42	7	(6)	42	37	27	10
	Bf 109D		27	(24)				
13 Apr 1939								
I. Gruppe	Bf 109E-1	39	39	(34)	39	38	36	2
II. Gruppe	Bf 109E-1	42	41	(39)	42	41	36	5
8 Jul 1939								
Stab	Bf 109E-1	3	3	(3)	3	3	3	
I. Gruppe	Bf 109E-1	48	43	(42)	39	43	34	5
II. Gruppe	Bf 109E-1	48	43	(40)	39	43	34	9
30 Sep 1939								
Stab	Bf 109E-1	3	3	(3)	3	3	3	
I. Gruppe	Bf 109E-1	48	42	(36)	39	36	35	
II. Gruppe	Bf 109E-1	48	39	(36)	39	36	28	
III. Gruppe	Bf 109E-1	39	45	(20)	39	34	27	
10(Nacht)	Bf 109D	12	14	(12)	12	11	11	
	Ar 68	6	6	(3)				
30 Dec 1939								
Stab	Bf 109E-1	3	3	(2)	3	3	2	
I. Gruppe	Bf 109E-1	39	39	(29)	39	38	23	
II. Gruppe	Bf 109E-1	48	37	(31)	39	38	23	
III. Gruppe	Bf 109E-1	39	39	(26)	39	46	30	
10(Nacht)	Bf 109D	12	13	(12)	12	15	9	
	Ar 68	6	6	(0)				

Unit	A/C Type	A/C			Pilots			
		Est	On Str	Serv	Est	Pres	Avail	Ltd Duty
30 Mar 1940								
Stab	Bf 109E-1	3	3	(0)	3	3	3	
I. Gruppe	Bf 109E-1	48	37	(28)	39	42	26	
II. Gruppe	Bf 109E-1	48	42	(30)	39	33	27	
III. Gruppe	Bf 109E-1	48	38	(25)	39	36	36	
29 Jun 1940								
Stab	Bf 109E-1+E-3	4	2	(0)	4	2	2	
I. Gruppe	Bf 109E-1+E-3	39	29	(22)	39	37	22	
II. Gruppe	Bf 109E-1+E-3	39	35	(16)	39	30	23	
III. Gruppe	Bf 109E-1+E-3	39	32	(25)	39	34	30	
17 Aug 1940								
Stab	Bf 109E-1+E-4	4	4	(2)	4			
I. Gruppe	Bf 109E-1+E-4	39	34	(24)	39			
II. Gruppe	Bf 109E-1+E-4	39	35	(29)	39			
III. Gruppe	Bf 109E-1+E-4	39	39	(33)	39			
7 Sep 1940								
Stab	Bf 109E-1+E-4	4	4	(3)	4			
I. Gruppe	Bf 109E-1+E-4	39	27	(20)	39			
II. Gruppe	Bf 109E-1+E-4	39	32	(28)	39			
III. Gruppe	Bf 109E-1+E-4	39	29	(26)	39			
28 Sep 1940								
Stab	Bf 109E-1+E-4	4	4	(2)	4	3	1	
I. Gruppe	Bf 109E-1+E-4	39	32	(27)	39	30	24	
II. Gruppe	Bf 109E-1+E-4	39	34	(26)	39	31	20	
III. Gruppe	Bf 109E-1+E-4	39	31	(26)	39	24	20	
28 Dec 1940								
Stab	Bf 109E-7	4	2	(2)	4	2	2	
I. Gruppe	Bf 109E-7	39	18	(16)	39	22	13	
II. Gruppe	Bf 109E-7	39	26	(13)	39	24	16	
III. Gruppe	Bf 109E-7	39	21	(16)	39	22	10	
29 Mar 1941								
Stab	Bf 109F-0+F-1	4	2	(1)	4	3	3	
I. Gruppe	Bf 109E-7	39	31	(30)	39	30	30	
II. Gruppe	Bf 109E-7	39	32	(25)	39	31	31	
III. Gruppe	Bf 109F-0+F-1	27	14	(1)	27	25	25	
7. Staffel	Bf 109E-7	12	15	(10)	12	10	10	
Erg. Gruppe	Bf 109E	15	15	(15)	15	15	15	

Unit	A/C Type	A/C			Pilots			
		Est	On Str	Serv	Est	Pres	Avail	Ltd Duty
28 Jun 1941								
Stab	Bf 109E-7	4	2	(1)	4	4	3	1
	Bf 109F-0+F-1	0	3	(0)				
I. Gruppe	Bf 109E-7	40	21	(19)	40	33	25	8
II. Gruppe	Bf 109E-7	40	30	(23)	40	32	25	
III. Gruppe	Bf 109F-1+F-2	43	39	(16)	40	27	24	3
Erg. Gruppe	Bf 109E	16	10	(6)	16	9	6	
27 Sep 1941								
Stab	Bf 109F-4	4	7	(6)	4	4	4	
I. Gruppe	Bf 109F-2+F-4	40	33	(26)	40	45	34	10
II. Gruppe	FW 190A-1	40	45	(30)	40	47	36	11
III. Gruppe	Bf 109F-2	40	32	(27)	40	47	32	13
	Bf 109F-4		1	(1)				
Erg. Gruppe	Bf 109E	16	10	(8)	16	17	13	4
27 Dec 1941								
Stab	FW 190A-1	4	4	(3)	4	5	4	1
I. Gruppe	FW 190A-1	40	41	(7)	40	50	29	19
	Bf 109F-4	0	29	(24)				
II. Gruppe	FW 190A-1+A-2	40	36	(28)	40	46	31	12
III. Gruppe	FW 190A-1+A-2	40	33	(27)	40	38	38	7
Erg. Gruppe	Bf 109E	16	12	(10)	16	18	10	
	Bf 109F-2		1	(0)				
28 Mar 1942								
Stab	FW 190A-2	4	6	(6)	4	6	6	
I. Gruppe	FW 190A-1	40	29	(18)	40	53	34	19
	Bf 109F-4	0	12	(8)				
II. Gruppe	FW 190A-1+A-2	40	31	(22)	40	48	24	22
III. Gruppe	FW 190A-1+A-2	40	29	(17)	40	41	26	14
10.(Jabo) Staffel	Bf 109F-4/R1	15	12	(10)	15			
30 Jun 1942								
Stab	FW 190A-2+A-3	4	7	(6)	4	7	6	1
I. Gruppe	FW 190A-1+A-2	40	37	(30)	40	37	32	5
II. Gruppe	FW 190A-2+A-3	40	30	(33)	40	39	35	4
III. Gruppe	FW 190A-2+A-3	40	36	(31)	40	38	26	12
10.(Jabo) Staffel	FW 190A-3+ A-4/U3	10	10	(5)	15	13	11	2
	Bf 109F-4/R1	5	7	(7)	15			
11.(Höhen) Staffel	Bf 109G-1	15	0	(0)	15	0	0	

Unit	A/C Type	A/C			Pilots			
		Est	On Str	Serv	Est	Pres	Avail	Ltd Duty

Sep 30 1942								
Stab	FW 190A-2+A-4	4	5	(3)	4	4	4	
I. Gruppe	FW 190A-3	40	37	(29)	40	40	34	5
II. Gruppe	FW 190A-3+A-4	40	37	(21)	40	41	33	7
III. Gruppe	FW 190A-3+A-4	40	39	(34)	40	40	32	6
	Bf 109G-4		5	(1)				
10.(Jabo) Staffel	FW 190A-3 + A-4/U3	15	16	(10)	15	13	9	3
11.(Höhen) Staffel	Bf 109G-1	15	10	(9)	15	12	8	3
	Bf 109G-1/R2		6	(3)				
31 Dec 1942								
Stab	FW 190A-4	4	5	(5)	4	4	2	2
I. Gruppe	FW 190A-4	40	34	(23)	40	43	27	14
II. Gruppe	FW 190A-3+A-4	40	33	(26)	40	53	28	18
	Bf 109G-4		11	(7)				
III. Gruppe	Bf 109G-4	40	2	(2)	40	48	35	12
	Bf 109G-1/R2		1	(0)				
	FW 190A-4		35	(29)				
11. Staffel	Bf 109G-1+G-5	15	12	(8)	15	10	0	10
10.(Jabo) Staffel	FW 190A-4/U3	15	14	(13)	15	13	12	1

A/C Est, On Str, Serv: aircraft establishment, on strength, serviceable. Pilots Est, Pres, Ready, Ltd Duty: pilot establishment, present, ready for duty, available for limited duty only.

APPENDIX II

JG 26 COMMANDERS 1936-1942

Geschwader Kommodoren

01 Nov 38 – 09 Dec 39	Obst. Eduard Ritter von Schleich	transferred
14 Dec 39 – 23 Jun 40	Maj. Hans-Hugo Witt	transferred
24 Jun 40 – 21 Aug 40	Maj. Gotthardt Handrick	transferred
22 Aug 40 – 05 Dec 41	Obstlt. Adolf Galland	transferred
06 Dec 41 – 10 Jan 43	Maj. Gerhard Schöpfel	transferred

First Gruppe Kommandeure

20 Feb 36 – 15 Mar 37	Hptm. Oskar Dinort	transferred
16 Mar 37 – 10 May 38	Hptm. Walter Grabmann	transferred
11 May 38 – 12 Jul 38	Hptm. Karl-Heinz Leesmann	transferred
13 Jul 38 – 23 Jun 40	Maj. Gotthardt Handrick	to CO JG 26
24 Jun 40 – 21 Aug 40	Hptm. Kurt Fischer	transferred
22 Aug 40 – 10 Jul 41	Hptm. Rolf Pingel	POW
11 Jul 41 – 31 May 43	Maj. Johannes Seifert	transferred

Second Gruppe Kommandeure

15 May 37 – 31 Oct 38	Maj. Eduard Ritter von Schleich	to CO JG 26
01 Nov 38 – 27 Jun 39	Hptm. Werner Palm	transferred
28 Jun 39 – 19 May 40	Hptm. Herwig Knüppel	KIA
20 May 40 – 31 May 40	Oblt. Karl Ebbighausen	interim
01 Jun 40 – 24 Jul 40	Hptm. Erich Noack	KIA
25 Jul 40 – 16 Aug 40	Hptm. Karl Ebbighausen	KIA
17 Aug 40 – 03 Oct 40	Hptm. Erich Bode	transferred
04 Oct 40 – 18 Sep 41	Hptm. Walter Adolph	KIA
19 Sep 41 – 21 Jul 42	Hptm. Joachim Müncheberg	transferred
22 Jul 42 – 02 Jan 43	Hptm. Conny Meyer	transferred

Third Gruppe Kommandeure

23 Sep 39 – 31 Oct 39	Hptm. Walter Kienitz	transferred
01 Nov 39 – 05 Jun 40	Maj. Ernst Freiherr von Berg	transferred
06 Jun 40 – 20 Aug 40	Maj. Adolf Galland	to CO JG 26
21 Aug 40 – 05 Dec 41	Maj. Gerhard Schöpfel	to CO JG 26
06 Dec 41 – 10 Jan 43	Hptm. Josef Priller	to CO JG 26

1st Staffel Kapitäne

21 Feb 36 – 30 Sep 37	Hptm Hans Janke	transferred
01 Oct 37 – 15 Apr 38	Oblt. Alexander Graf zu Dohna	KIA in Spain
16 Apr 38 – 30 Jun 38	Oblt. Karl Böhm-Tettelbach	transferred
01 Jul 38 – 08 Sep 40	Oblt. Franz Hörnig	transferred
09 Sep 40 – 17 Nov 40	Oblt. Eberhard Henrici	KIA
18 Nov 40 – 19 Nov 40	Lt. Hans Heinemann	interim
20 Nov 40 – 05 Dec 41	Oblt. Josef Priller	to CO III/JG 26
06 Dec 41 – 29 Oct 42	Oblt. Josef Haiböck	transferred
30 Oct 42 – 05 Jan 43	Oblt. Franz Nels	to III/JG 26

2nd Staffel Kapitäne

21 Feb 36 – 28 Feb 37	Oblt. Fritz Schleif	transferred
01 Mar 37 – 22 Sep 39	Hptm. Walter Kienitz	to CO III/JG 26
23 Sep 39 – 17 May 41	Hptm. Fritz Losigkeit	transferred
18 May 41 – 02 Jul 41	Oblt. Martin Rysavy	KIA
03 Jul 41 – 12 Jul 41	Lt. Horst Ulenberg	KIA
13 Jul 41 – 16 Mar 42	Oblt. Christian Eickhoff	transferred
17 Mar 42 – 14 Mar 43	Hptm. Fülbert Zink	MIA in USSR

3rd Staffel Kapitäne

15 Mar 37 – 29 Feb 40	Oblt. Wolfheinrich Fhr. von Houwald	transferred
01 Mar 40 – 10 Jul 41	Hptm. Johannes Seifert	to CO I/JG 26
11 Jul 41 – 01 Feb 42	Oblt. Walter Otte	to Erg/JGr 26
02 Feb 42 – 30 Apr 42	Oblt. Johannes Schmidt	to 11(H)/JG 26
01 May 42 – 12 Jun 43	Hptm. Rolf Hermichen	to CO III/JG 26

4th Staffel Kapitäne

03 Mar 37 – 01 Jul 38	Maj. Werner Rentsch	transferred
02 Jul 38 – 01 Nov 38	Hptm. Werner Palm	to CO II/JG 234
02 Nov 38 – 23 Sep 39	Oblt. Eduard Neumann	to CO 8/JG 26
24 Sep 39 – 24 Jul 40	Hptm. Karl Ebbighausen	to CO II/JG 26
25 Jul 40 – 16 Aug 40	Hptm. Erich Bode	to CO II/JG 26
17 Aug 40 – 07 Sep 40	Oblt. Hans Krug	POW
08 Sep 40 – 23 Aug 42	Oblt. Kurt Ebersberger	WIA
24 Aug 42 – 03 Nov 42	Lt. Ernst Janda	interim
04 Nov 42 – 19 Dec 42	Oblt. Paul Keller	to CO 10(J)/JG 26
20 Dec 42 – 23 Feb 43	Hptm. Kurt Ebersberger	transferred

5th Staffel Kapitäne

03 Mar 37 – 30 Jun 37	Oblt. Nikolaus von Below	transferred
01 Jul 37 – 27 Jun 39	Oblt. Herwig Knüppel	to CO II/JG 26
28 Jun 39 – 24 Dec 39	Hptm. Hubertus von Bonin	transferred
25 Dec 39 – 22 Aug 40	Oblt. Hubertus Freiherr von Holtey	to CO ErgSt/JG 26
23 Aug 40 – 04 May 42	Oblt. Wolfgang Kosse	transferred
05 May 42 – 02 Jan 43	Oblt. Wilhelm-Ferdinand Galland	to CO II/JG 26

6th Staffel Kapitäne

03 Mar 37 – 30 Sep 37	Lt. Alexander Graf zu Dohna	to CO 1/JG 234
01 Oct 37 – 01 Jul 38	Oblt. Hubert Kroeck	transferred
02 Jul 38 – 01 Jun 40	Hptm. Alfred Pomaska	KIA
02 Jun 40 – 22 Dec 41	Oblt. Walter Schneider	KIFA
23 Dec 41 – 30 Jun 42	Oblt. Otto Behrens	transferred
01 Jul 42 – 20 Sep 42	Oblt. Theo Lindemann	transferred
21 Sep 42 – 17 Aug 43	Hptm. Johannes Naumann	to CO II/JG 26

7th Staffel Kapitäne

11 Dec 39 – 21 Aug 40	Oblt. Georg Beyer	to Stab/JG 26
22 Aug 40 – 17 Sep 41	Oblt. Joachim Müncheberg	to CO II/JG 26
18 Sep 41 – 29 Jun 43	Hptm. Klaus Mietusch	to CO III/JG 26

8th Staffel Kapitäne

23 Sep 39 – 15 Mar 40	Oblt. Eduard Neumann	transferred
16 Mar 40 – 07 Aug 40	Oblt. Kuno Wendt	transferred
08 Aug 40 – 28 Jun 41	Oblt. Gustav Sprick	KIA
29 Jun 41 – 13 Aug 41	Oblt. Hans-Jürgen Westphal	WAC
21 Aug 41 – 06 Nov 41	Hptm. Johannes Schmid	KIA
10 Nov 41 – 22 Jun 43	Oblt. Karl Borris	to CO I/JG 26

9th Staffel Kapitäne

23 Sep 39 – 21 Aug 40	Oblt. Gerhard Schöpfel	to CO III/JG 26
22 Aug 40 – 05 Nov 40	Oblt. Heinz Ebeling	POW
12 Nov 40 – 06 Apr 43	Hptm. Kurt Ruppert	to CO III/JG 26

10th (Nachtjagd) Staffel Kapitän

01 Sep 39 – 31 Dec 39	Oblt. Johannes Steinhoff	Staffel absorbed in IV(Nachtjagd)/JG 2
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10th (Jagdbomber) Staffel Kapitäne

10 Mar 42 – 12 Jul 42	Hptm. Karl Plunser	transferred
13 Jul 42 – 17 Jul 42	Oblt. Schröfter	interim
18 Jul 42 – 30 Jul 42	Oblt. Hans-Joachim Geburtig	POW
01 Aug 42 – 04 Nov 42	Oblt. Paul Keller	to CO 4/JG 26
05 Nov 42 – 19 Dec 42	Oblt. Kurt Müller	KIA
20 Dec 42 – 24 Mar 43	Oblt. Paul Keller	KIA

11th (Höhen) Staffel Kapitäne

08 Aug 42 – 19 Aug 42	Oblt. Johannes Schmidt	KIA
20 Aug 42 – 4 Dec 42	Oblt. Hans-Jürgen Westphal	Staffel disbanded

11th Staffel Kapitän

10 Dec 42 – 15 Jan 43	Lt. Paul Schauder	to Stab/JG 26
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APPENDIX III

JG 26 BASES 1939-1942

Geschwader Stab

01 Nov 38 – 25 Aug 39 Düsseldorf
 25 Aug 39 – 01 Nov 39 Bonn-Odendorf
 01 Nov 39 – 13 May 40 Dortmund
 13 May 40 – 18 May 40 Mönchen Gladbach
 18 May 40 – 25 May 40 Neerhespen
 Landen (BE)
 25 May 40 – 04 Jun 40 Quevaucamps (BE)
 04 Jun 40 – 05 Jun 40 Le Touquet
 05 Jun 40 – 13 Jun 40 Bois Jean
 13 Jun 40 – 17 Jun 40 Morgny
 17 Jun 40 – 23 Jun 40 Villacoublay
 23 Jun 40 – 30 Jul 40 Dortmund
 30 Jul 40 – 07 Dec 40 Audembert
 07 Dec 40 – 09 Feb 41 Abbeville-Drucat
 09 Feb 41 – 01 Apr 41 Düsseldorf
 01 Apr 41 – 01 Jun 41 Brest-Guipavas
 01 Jun 41 – 01 Jun 42 Audembert
 01 Jun 42 – 01 Jan 43 St. Omer-Wizernes

First Gruppe

20 Feb 36 – 07 Mar 36 Lippstadt
 07 Mar 36 – 25 Aug 39 Köln
 25 Aug 39 – 01 Nov 39 Bonn-Odendorf
 01 Nov 39 – 10 Feb 40 Dortmund
 10 Feb 40 – 15 May 40 Bönninghardt
 15 May 40 – 23 May 40 Eindhoven (NL)
 23 May 40 – 02 Jun 40 Antwerp
 02 Jun 40 – 04 Jun 40 Chièvres (BE)
 04 Jun 40 – 05 Jun 40 Etaples (F)
 05 Jun 40 – 11 Jun 40 Hesdin
 11 Jun 40 – 16 Jun 40 Samoussy-Laon
 16 Jun 40 – 20 Jun 40 St. Rémy
 20 Jun 40 – 23 Jun 40 Nevers
 23 Jun 40 – 26 Jun 40 Lyon
 26 Jun 40 – 15 Jul 40 Bönninghardt
 15 Jul 40 – 07 Dec 40 Audembert
 07 Dec 40 – 09 Feb 41 Abbeville-Drucat
 09 Feb 41 – 01 Apr 41 Dortmund
 01 Apr 41 – 01 Jun 41 Brest-Guipavas

01 Jun 41 – 17 Nov 41 St. Omer-
 Clairmarais
 17 Nov 41 – 20 Sep 42 St. Omer-Arques
 20 Sep 42 – 22 Jan 43 St. Omer-Wizernes

Second Gruppe

15 May 37 – 25 Aug 39 Düsseldorf
 25 Aug 39 – 01 Nov 39 Bönninghardt
 01 Nov 39 – 27 Jan 40 Werl
 27 Jan 40 – 13 May 40 Dortmund
 13 May 40 – 18 May 40 Uringden (D)
 18 May 40 – 29 May 40 Neerhespen Landen
 (BE)
 29 May 40 – 04 Jun 40 Chièvres (BE)
 04 Jun 40 – 05 Jun 40 Le Touquet
 05 Jun 40 – 13 Jun 40 Bois Jean
 13 Jun 40 – 17 Jun 40 Morgny
 17 Jun 40 – 23 Jun 40 Villacoublay
 23 Jun 40 – 21 Jul 40 Dortmund
 21 Jul 40 – 07 Dec 40 Marquise
 07 Dec 40 – 09 Feb 41 Abbeville-Drucat
 09 Feb 41 – 03 Apr 41 Düsseldorf
 03 Apr 41 – 01 Jun 41 Morlaix
 01 Jun 41 – 01 July 41 Maldeghem
 01 Jul 41 – 15 Oct 41 Moorseele
 15 Oct 41 – 22 Dec 41 Wevelghem
 22 Dec 41 – 08 Jan 43 Abbeville-Drucat

Third Gruppe

23 Sep 39 – 01 Nov 39 Werl
 01 Nov 39 – 13 May 40 Essen-Mühlheim
 13 May 40 – 17 May 40 Mönchen-Gladbach
 17 May 40 – 19 May 40 Peer (BE)
 19 May 40 – 27 May 40 Beauvechain (BE)
 27 May 40 – 04 Jun 40 Chièvres (BE)
 04 Jun 40 – 13 Jun 40 Capelle (F)
 13 Jun 40 – 17 Jun 40 Les Thilliers (F)
 17 Jun 40 – 22 Jun 40 Villacoublay
 22 Jun 40 – 01 Jul 40 Mönchen Gladbach
 01 Jul 40 – 21 Jul 40 Döberitz

21 Jul 40 – 10 Nov 40 Caffiers
10 Nov 40 – 09 Feb 41 Abbeville-Drucat
09 Feb 41 – 01 Apr 41 Bonn-Hangelar
01 Apr 41 – 01 Jun 41 St. Brieuc
01 Jun 41 – 19 Oct 41 Ligescourt
19 Oct 41 – 07 Apr 42 Coquelles
07 Apr 42 – 14 May 43 Wevelghem

7th Staffel – Mediterranean Detachment

09 Feb 41 – 06 Apr 41 Gela, Sicily
06 Apr 41 – 08 Apr 41 Taranto, Italy
08 Apr 41 – 25 May 41 Gela, Sicily
31 May 41 – 14 Jun 41 Molaoi, Greece
14 Jun 41 – 24 Sep 41 Ain El Gazala,
Libya

10th (Nachtjagd) Staffel

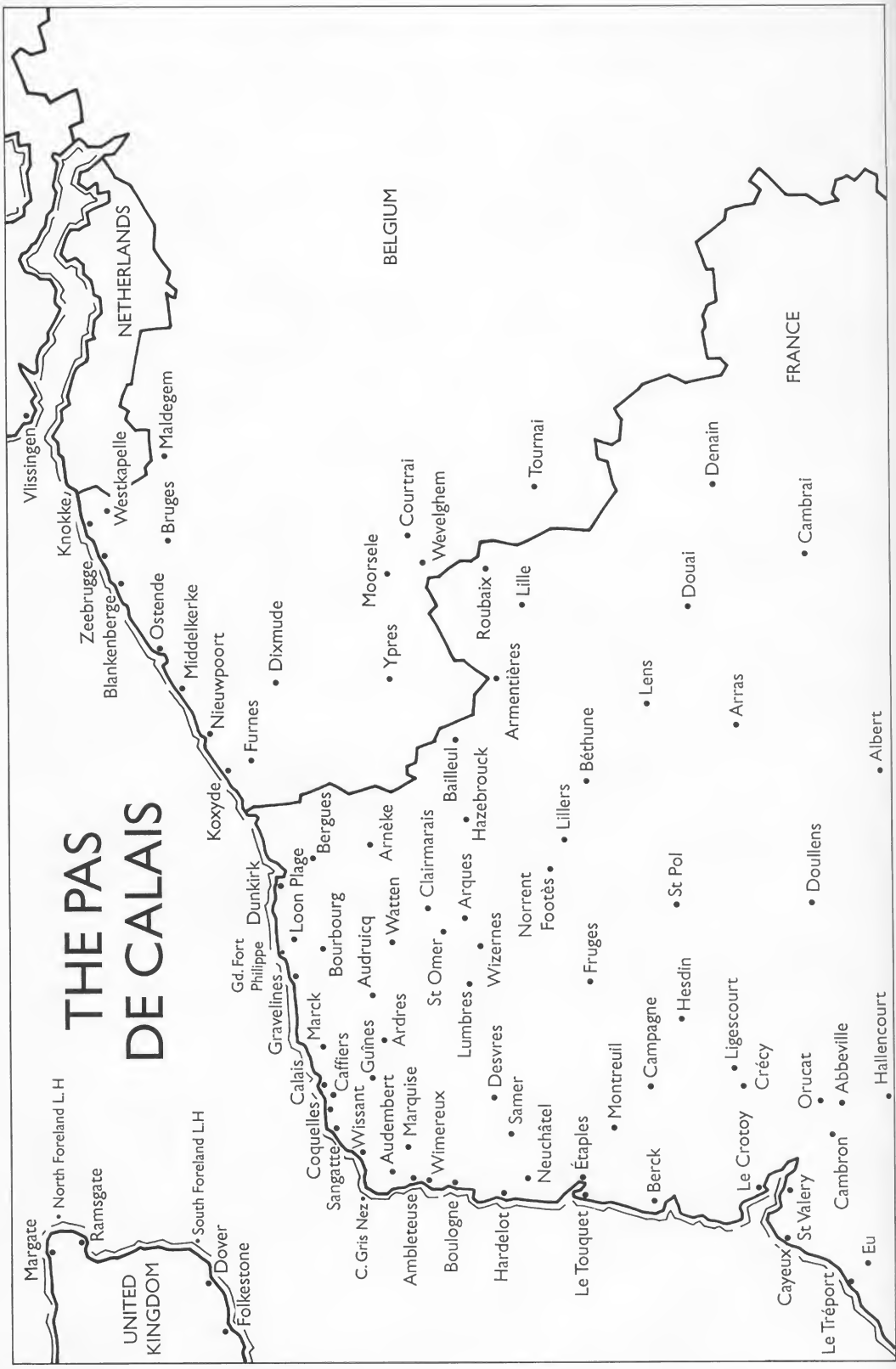
01 Sep 39 -12 Nov 39 Bonn-Hangelar
12 Nov 39 – 31 Dec 39 Jever (into IV
(Nachtjagd)/JG 2)

10th (Jagdbomber) Staffel

10 Mar 42 – 26 May 42 St. Omer-Arques
26 May 42 – 18 Jun 42 Caen-Carpiquet
18 Jun 42 – 10 Jul 42 Le Bourget
(non-operational)
10 Jul 42 – 27 Jul 42 Caen-Carpiquet
27 Jul 42 – 10 Aug 42 Evreux-St. Andre
10 Aug 42 – 14 Nov 42 St. Omer-Wizernes
14 Nov 42 – 18 Dec 42 Marseilles-Istres
18 Dec 42 – 15 Apr 43 St. Omer-Wizernes
(into SKG 10)

11th (Höhen) Staffel

30 Jul 42 – 06 Nov 42 Norrent-Fontes
15 Nov 42 – 04 Dec 42 Tunis (disbanded)



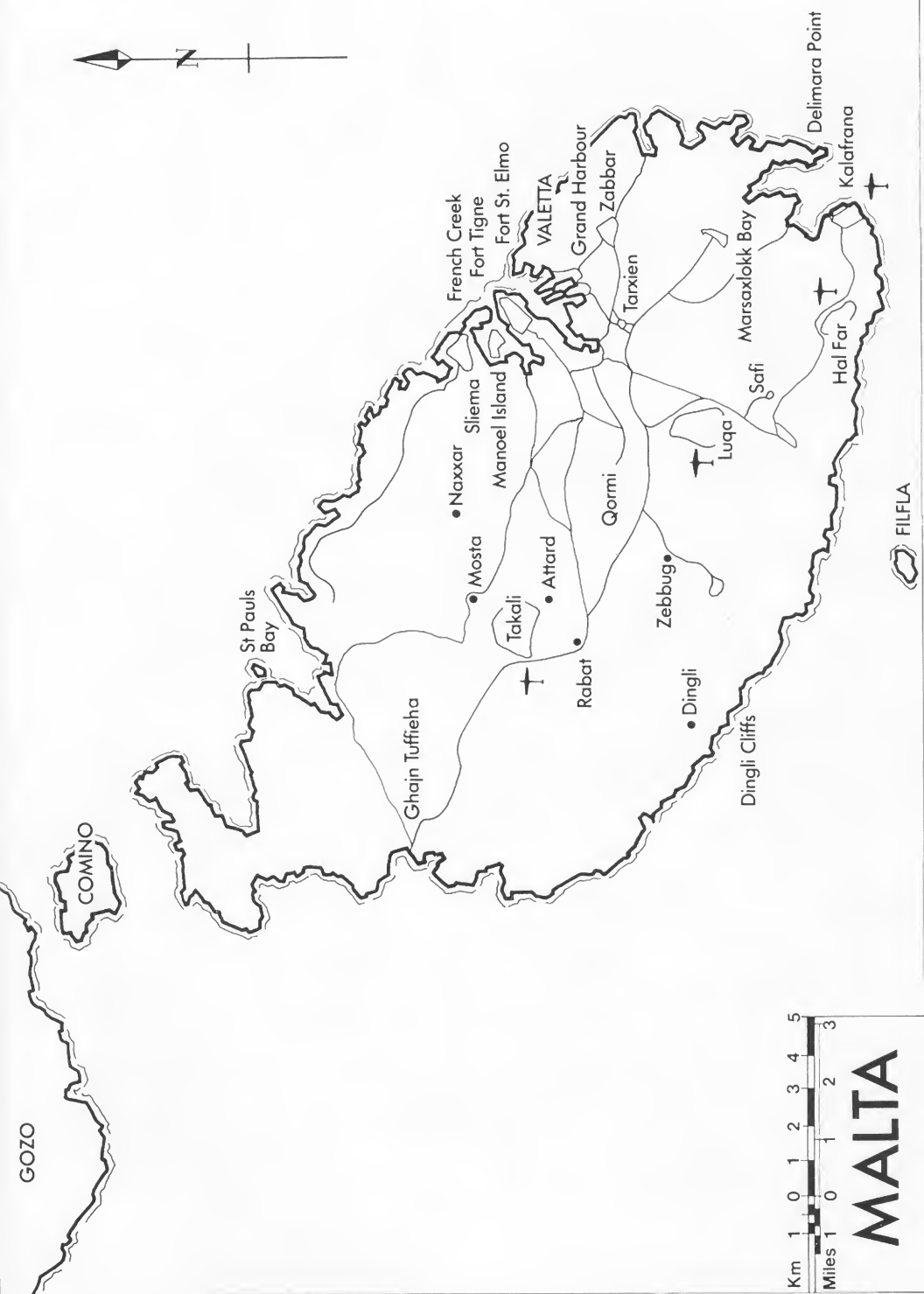
THE PAS DE CALAIS

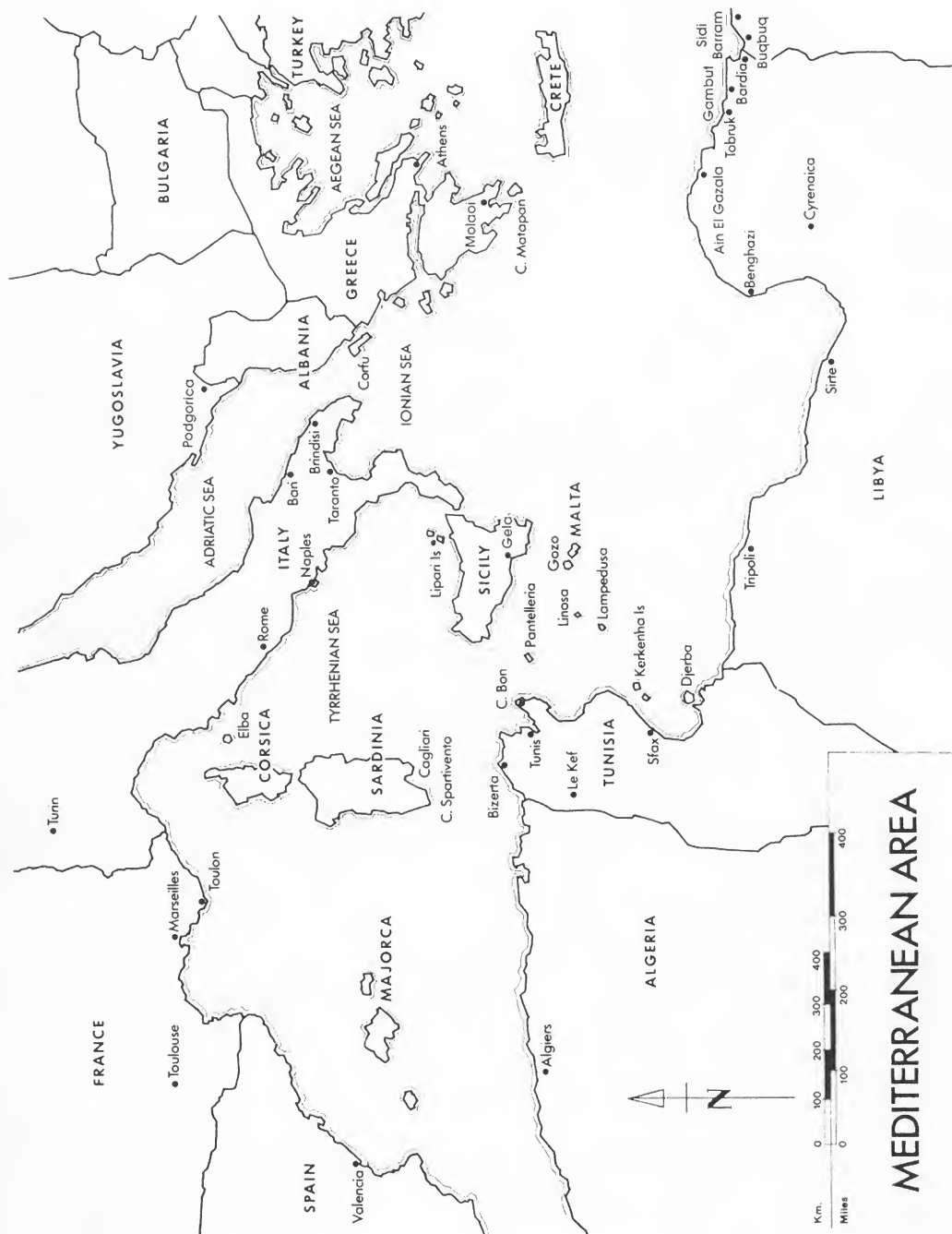
BELGIUM

NETHERLANDS

FRANCE

UNITED
KINGDOM





MEDITERRANEAN AREA

SOURCES

GENERAL

The principal archives consulted, and their file designations, are:

Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv, Freiburg (BA-MA): (RL ##/####)

Public Records Office, Kew: (AIR ##/####)

ULTRA transcripts: (ULTRA reel#-message#)

USAF Historical Research Agency, Maxwell AFB: (HRA ###.####)

The following primary sources are referenced *in passim*:

Abschusskladde des I/JG 26 [I/JG 26 victory list]. (RL 10/260)

Abschusskladde des II/JG 26 [II/JG 26 victory list]. (RL 10/261)

Deutsche Dienststelle (WAST), Berlin. [German personnel bureau records – include circumstances of loss for fatalities]. (Files are presently closed to private researchers; abstracted for me by A. Abendroth.)

JG 26 Ehrenbücher [biographies of JG 26 fatalities]. (RL 10/265-275)

JG 26 Geschwader Geschichte [collection of documents assembled at the end of 1942 for Major Schöpfel; primary source for Priller's history]. (RL 10/284)

Luftwaffen-Personalamt L.P. (A)5(V) Abschüsse-Tagebücher [OKL daily victory claim worksheets]. (microfilm obtained from BA-MA)

Ob.d.L. Gen. Q. Gen. 6. Abt. Flugzeugunfälle und Verluste bei den Verbänden (täglich) [OKL daily aircraft loss lists]. (microfilm obtained from the Imperial War Museum)

Josef Priller's *JG 26: Geschichte eines Jagdgeschwaders* is referenced *in passim* for Geschwader and Gruppe base locations, taken from maps drawn by Alfred Iwanek, a Geschwader clerk. Iwanek's source material cannot be found in the BA-MA files.

Data for Geschwader victory claims not in the BA-MA records are taken from:

1. logbooks, interviews, and photographs of aircraft victory markings.
2. 7/JG 26 claims through mid-1941 – Buchmann photographs of victory plaques.
3. A copy of Priller's claims list, supplied by de Meester.
4. Other claims from Bock files – Bock's original sources are primarily unpublished contemporary records and logbooks.

CHAPTER 1: THE PRE-WAR YEARS

Diaries: Backhaus, Buchmann.

Interviews: Böhm-Tettelbach, Bürschgens, Galland, Dagmar Herzog, Horten, Losigkeit.

Logbook: Herzog.

Spanish Civil War: Proctor, *Hitler's Luftwaffe in the Spanish Civil War*; Ries, *The Legion Condor*.

CHAPTER 2: SITZKRIEG

Diaries: Backhaus, Buchmann.

French Air Force, Royal Air Force: Shores, *Fledgling Eagles*.

Interviews: Bürschgens, Naumann, Schöpfel.
18 Dec 39: K. Schumacher, "Der 18. Dezember 1939", *Jägerblatt* 63/6, p.6.

CHAPTER 3: BLITZKRIEG IN THE WEST

Crash sites: Roba, Vervoort documents.
Diaries: Backhaus, Buchmann.
French Air Force: Martin, *Invisibles vainqueurs*; De Jong, Roba documents.
Interviews: Bürschgens, Galland, Horten, Naumann.
Logbook: Galland.
Royal Air Force: Bingham, *Blitzed!*; Foreman documents; De Decker, Roba documents (combat over Belgium & France); De Jong, Grimm documents (combat over Netherlands); published RAF pilot memoirs and squadron histories.
Logbook (RAF): Hellyer.
Royal Netherlands Air Force: "1939-40/La Bataille de France Vol. IX: L'Aviation Néerlandaise", *Icare* No. 79 (1976); De Jong, Grimm, Vervoort documents.
10 May – 21 May 40: Cull, *Twelve Days in May*.
24 May – 2 Jun 40: Franks, *The Air Battle of Dunkirk*.

CHAPTER 4: THE BATTLE OF BRITAIN I

Airfield descriptions: HRA 512.277.
Crash sites and descriptions of crashed aircraft: untitled RAF AI document via Hickey; Ramsey, *The Battle of Britain Then & Now: Mk. III*.
Daily Luftwaffe claim & loss summaries: *OKM Kriegstagebuch 8/40-4/41*, HRA K113.307-1.
Diaries: Backhaus, Buchmann.
Interviews: Bürschgens, Galland, Horten, Kemen, Naumann, Regenauer, Schöpfel, Schrödter.
JG 26 *Kriegstagebuch*: quoted by correspondent Wilhelm Renner in Priller, *JG 26: Geschichte eines Jagdgeschwaders*. The original document was destroyed in 1945.
Logbook: Galland.
OKW communiqués: Nowarra, *Die Luftschlacht um England*.
Royal Air Force: Collier, *The Defense of the United Kingdom*; Hunt, *Twenty-One Squadrons*; Mason, *Battle over Britain*; Ramsey, *The Battle of Britain Then & Now: Mk. III*; Robinson, *Royal Air Force Fighter Squadrons in the Battle of Britain*; Townsend, *Duel of Eagles*; Eriksson, Mucha documents; published RAF pilot memoirs and squadron histories.
Logbooks (RAF): Haysom, Hellyer.
12 Aug 40 – Clarke anecdote: McKee, *Strike from the Sky*.
18 Aug 40: Price, *The Hardest Day*.

CHAPTER 5: THE BATTLE OF BRITAIN II

Airfield descriptions: HRA 512.277.
Crash sites and crashed aircraft descriptions: untitled RAF A.I.(2) document via Hickey; Ramsey, *The Battle of Britain Then & Now: Mk. III*.
Daily Luftwaffe claim & loss summaries; Jafü 2 mission reports: *OKM Kriegstagebuch 8/40-4/41*, HRA K113.307-1.
Diaries: Backhaus, Buchmann.
Interviews: Dahmer, Galland, Schöpfel.
JG 26 *Kriegstagebuch* [war diary]: quoted by correspondent Wilhelm Renner in Priller, *JG 26: Geschichte eines Jagdgeschwaders*. The original document was destroyed in 1945.
Logbooks: Galland, Martin.
OKW communiqués: Nowarra, *Die Luftschlacht um England*.
Royal Air Force: Collier, *The Defense of the United Kingdom*; Hunt, *Twenty-One Squadrons*; Mason, *Battle over Britain*; Ramsey, *The Battle of Britain Then & Now: Mk. III*; Robinson, *Royal Air Force Fighter Squadrons in the Battle of Britain*; Townsend, *Duel of Eagles*; Mucha documents; published RAF biographies, memoirs, and squadron histories.
Logbook (RAF): Haysom.
No. 11 Group operations records: AIR 25/193.

Victory claim verification procedure: Stokes, *Paddy Finucane*.
Nov-Dec 40: Foreman, *Battle of Britain: The Forgotten Months*.
Jan-Feb 41: Foreman, *1941: The Turning Point Part 1*.

CHAPTER 6: THE 7TH STAFFEL IN THE MEDITERRANEAN THEATER

Diary: Buchmann.
Fliegerkorps X history: HRA 512.621 VII/54.
Interview: Neumann.
Müncheberg correspondence: Priller, *JG 26: Geschichte eines Jagdgeschwaders*.
OKW communiqués: Nowarra, *Geleitzug: Schlachten im Mittelmeer*.
Royal Air Force: HMSO, *The Air Battle of Malta*; Richards, *Royal Air Force 1939-1945 Vol. I: The Fight at Odds*; Shores, *Malta: The Hurricane Years*; Shores, *Fighters over the Desert*;
Malta Air Command history: AIR 24-908.
Malta airfield histories: AIR 24-334, 409, 502, 807, 908.
Malta war diary: quoted in Cameron, *Red Duster, White Ensign*.
Royal Yugoslav Air Force: Shores, *Air War for Yugoslavia, Greece, & Crete*.
South African Air Force: Brown, *Eagles Strike: Vol. IV, South African Forces in WWII*.
ULTRA intercepts: 74-131; 75-281; 76-527 – 1174(various).

CHAPTER 7: THE RETURN TO FRANCE

Airfield descriptions: HRA 512.277; Vanackere, *von Flugplatz tot Airport; Van-overbeke, Moorsele*.
Crash sites: De Decker, Roba, Vervoort documents.
Diaries: Backhaus, Buchmann.
Interviews: Battmer, Galland, Glunz, Schneider, Schöpfel.
Jafü 2 organization and strength: OKM *Kriegstagebuch 8/40-4/41*, HRA K113.307-1.
Logbooks: Dietze, Galland, Glunz, Martin.
OKW communiqués: Piekalkiewicz, *Luftkrieg 1939-1945*.
RAF signal intercept files: AIR 22/488-489.
Royal Air Force: Bowyer, *Fighter Command*; Bowyer, *Two Group R.A.F.*; Foreman, *1941: The Turning Point Parts 1 & 2*; Richards, *Royal Air Force 1939-1945 Vol. I: The Fight at Odds*; Shores, *Aces High*; Foreman, Guest, LeClercq, McAuley, Mucha, Olynyk, Wood documents; published RAF biographies, memoirs and squadron histories.
Interviews (Allies): Gaze.
Logbooks (Allies): Gaze.
No. 11 Group operations records: AIR 25/193.
No. 11 Group operations records – appendices: AIR 25/200.
No. 12 Group operations records: AIR 25/219.
RAF evader interviews: AIR 40/258.

CHAPTER 8: THE ARRIVAL OF THE FW 190

Airfield descriptions: HRA 512.277.
Crash sites: De Decker, De Jong, Roba, Vanackere, Vanoverbeke, Vervoort documents.
Diaries: Backhaus, Buchmann, Jauer.
Interviews: Fischer, Galland, Glunz, Schneider, Schöpfel, Schrödter.
Logbooks: Dietze, Glunz, Lindemann, Martin, Mayer, Pistor, Priller (RL 10/262).
OKW communiqués: Piekalkiewicz, *Luftkrieg 1939-1945*.
RAF signal intercept files: AIR 22/490-493.
Royal Air Force: Bowyer, *Fighter Command*; Bowyer, *Two Group R.A.F.*; Brown, *Canadian Wing Commanders*; Collier, *The Defense of the United Kingdom*; Richards, *Royal Air Force 1939-1945 Vol. I: The Fight at Odds*; Shores, *Aces High*; Eriksson, Foreman, Guest, LeClercq, McAuley, Mucha, Sarkar, Olynyk, Vandenameele, Wood documents; published RAF biographies, memoirs, and squadron histories.
Interviews (Allies): Gaze, Hall, Smith.
Logbooks (Allies): Armstrong, Gaze, Hall, Smith.
No. 11 Group operations records: AIR 25/193.
No. 11 Group operations records – appendices: AIR 25/200-201.
No. 12 Group operations records: AIR 25/219.

RAF evader interviews: AIR 40/258.
Stab/JG 26 Abschussmeldungen [victory reports]: RL 10/260.
20 Sep 41 – Surma quote: Sarkar, *The Invisible Thread*.
5 Dec 41 – Göring speech: Galland files.

CHAPTER 9: WINTER ON THE CHANNEL FRONT

Airfield descriptions: HRA 512.277, Crump.
Crash sites: De Decker, De Jong, Roba, Vervoort documents.
GdJ Br.B. Nr. 129/42 [operational training directive]: RL 10/291.
Interviews: Crump, Fischer, Glunz, W. Schmidt, Schöpfel, Stammberger.
Jabo raids on England: Collier, *The Defense of the United Kingdom*; Ramsey, *The Blitz Then & Now*.
Logbooks: Dietze, Glunz, Martin, Mayer, Pistor, Priller.
OKW communiqués: Piekalkiewicz, *Luftkrieg 1939-1945*.
Priller *Abschussmeldungen* and diary (May only): RL 10/263.
RAF A.I.(K) Report (POW interrogation): HRA 75/43.
RAF signal intercept files: AIR 22/494.
Royal Air Force: Bowyer, *Two Group R.A.F.*; Brown, *Canadian Wing Commanders*; Richards, *Royal Air Force 1939-1945 Vol. I: The Fight at Odds*; Sarkar, *A Few of the Many*; Shores, *Aces High*; Foreman, Guest, LeClercq, McAuley, Mucha, Roba, Sarkar, Olynyk, Vandenameele, Wood documents; published RAF biographies, memoirs, and squadron histories.
Interviews (Allies): Gaze, Hall, Smith.
Logbooks (Allies): Armstrong, Gaze, Hall, Smith.
No. 11 Group operations records: AIR 25/194.
No. 11 Group operations records – appendices: AIR 25/203.
No. 12 Group operations records: AIR 25/219.
RAF evader interviews: AIR 40/258.
12 Feb 42: RL 8/252-258; AIR 41/47.
3 Mar-9 May 42 – Fighter Command claims and losses: PRO Sholto Douglas file, quoted in Stokes, *Paddy Finucane*.
13 Mar 42 – Portal correspondence: PRO Portal file, quoted in Stokes, *Paddy Finucane*.
5 May 42: Vandenameele, *Circus 157*.

CHAPTER 10: FOCKE-WULF SUMMER

Airfield descriptions: HRA 512.277.
Crash sites: De Decker, De Jong, Roba, Vervoort documents.
Interviews: Crump, Glunz, Gomann, Schild, Schöpfel, Stammberger, Wittmann.
Jabo raids on England: Collier, *The Defense of the United Kingdom*; Ramsey, *The Blitz Then & Now*.
Logbooks: Crump, Dietze, Ellenrieder, Glunz, Gomann, Mayer, Priller, Stammberger.
OKW communiqués: Piekalkiewicz, *Luftkrieg 1939-1945*.
RAF A.I.(K) Reports (POW interrogations): HRA 170/42, 233/42, 271/42, 286/42, 75/43.
RAF signal intercept files: AIR 22/494-495.
Royal Air Force: Bowyer, *Two Group R.A.F.*; Brown, *Canadian Wing Commanders*; Richards, *Royal Air Force 1939-1945 Vol. II: The Fight Avails*; Sarkar, *A Few of the Many*; Shores, *Aces High*; Foreman, Guest, LeClercq, McAuley, Mucha, Roba, Sarkar, Olynyk, Wood documents; published RAF biographies, memoirs, and squadron histories.
Interviews (Allies): Gaze, Hall.
Logbooks (Allies): Armstrong, Gaze, Hall.
No. 11 Group operations records: AIR 25/194.
No. 11 Group operations records – appendices: AIR 25/203.
No. 12 Group operations records: AIR 25/219.
RAF evader interviews: AIR 40/258.
US 8th Air Force: Freeman, *Mighty Eighth War Diary*.
US 8th AF bombardment squadron histories: HRA SQ-BOMB-###(HI).
US 8th AF bombardment group histories: HRA GP-###-HI (BOMB).
US 8th AF fighter squadron histories: HRA SQ-FTR – ###(HI).
US 8th AF fighter group histories: HRA GP-###-HI (FTR).

VIII Bomber Command mission reports (include RAF Fighter Command operational summaries): HRA 520.332.

23 Jun 42 – Faber mission: Sarkar, *Thru Peril to the Stars*.

19 Aug 42: Franks, *The Greatest Air Battle*; W.J.A. Wood, “Combat over Dieppe: Victory or Defeat?”, *Royal Air Force Yearbook 1977*; J. Campbell, “Air Operations and the Dieppe Raid”, *Aerospace Historian* 23/1 (1976).

CHAPTER 11: A NEW ENEMY

Crash sites: De Decker, De Jong, Laing, Roba, Vanackere, Vanoverbeke, Van den Broucke, documents.

Diaries: Backhaus, Jauer.

Interviews: Bühne, Crump, Gomann, Naumann, Polster, Schöpfel, Stammberger, Wittmann.

Jabo raids on England: Collier, *The Defense of the United Kingdom*; Ramsey, *The Blitz Then & Now*.

Logbooks: Crump, Dietze, Ellenrieder, Glunz, Gomann, Heuser, Mayer, Polster, Priller, Stammberger.

OKW communiqués: Piekalkiewicz, *Luftkrieg 1939-1945*; 6 Dec 42 via Molge.

RAF A.I.(K) Report (St. Omer airfields): HRA 384/42.

RAF A.I.(K) Reports (POW interrogations): HRA 271/42, 286/42, 287/42, 75/43.

RAF signal intercept files: AIR 22/495-496.

Royal Air Force: Bowyer, *Two Group R.A.F.*; Brown, *Canadian Wing Commanders*; Richards, *Royal Air Force 1939-1945 Vol. II: The Fight Avails*; Shores, *Aces High*; Foreman, Guest, McAuley, Mucha, Roba, Olynyk, Wood documents; published RAF biographies, memoirs, and squadron histories.

Interviews (Allies): Gaze, Hall, La Chasse.

Logbooks (Allies): Armstrong, Cleland, Due, Gaze.

No. 11 Group operations records: AIR 25/194.

No. 11 Group operations records – appendices: AIR 25/203.

No. 12 Group operations records: AIR 25/219.

RAF evader interviews: AIR 40/258.

US 8th Air Force: Freeman, *Mighty Eighth War Diary*; published unit histories.

US 8th AF bombardment squadron histories: HRA SQ-BOMB-###(HI).

US 8th AF bombardment group histories: HRA GP-###-HI (BOMB).

US 8th AF fighter squadron histories: HRA SQ-FTR – ###(HI).

US 8th AF fighter group histories: HRA GP-###-HI (FTR).

VIII Bomber Command mission reports (include RAF Fighter Command operational summaries): HRA 520.332.

23 Nov 42 – GdJ letter: RL 10/291.

21 Dec 42 – GdJ tactical regulations: HRA 512.6314U.

APPENDIX I

JG 26 ORGANIZATION AND STRENGTH

HRA 137.306-14.

APPENDIX II

JG 26 COMMANDERS

RL 10/264, supplemented by data from personnel records.

APPENDIX III

JG 26 BASES

A. Iwanek maps in Priller, *JG 26: Geschichte eines Jagdgeschwaders*.

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